



SOUTHERN HUMANITIES REVIEW

THE BICENTENNIAL ISSUE



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The Southern Humanities Review

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The SOUTHERN HUMANITIES REVIEW is a scholarly publication devoted to serious writings, both creative and critical, in the realm of arts and letters, philosophy, religion, and history. Manuscripts are solicited. Essays, articles, or stories should, in general, range between 3,500 and 5,000 words; poems should not exceed two pages in length. Type-scripts should conform to the MLA Style Sheet and must be accompanied by return postage: Manuscripts lacking return postage will not be acknowledged or returned. Contributions may be addressed to the Editors, 9088 Haley Center, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama 36830. Issued quarterly—October, January, April, July. Subscription rate \$6.00 annually. Single copies \$2.00.

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EDITORS' COMMENT

As we began work on this special Bicentennial issue of the *Southern Humanities Review*, our intention was to seek an answer to a number of hard questions about the South, thus filling a need for intelligent self-examination about our region and its values, which is particularly appropriate in this Bicentennial year. How, for example, is the Southern heritage different from that of other regions? How are these differences reflected? Have our original values survived? If so, why? If not, how has our heritage changed? More specifically, what has actually happened in the South in the past 200 years—in letters, in science, and in the lives of our people?

It has been the constant concern of the *Southern Humanities Review* throughout its ten years of existence to serve as a voice for such humanistic inquiry in the South. Thus it was with considerable excitement that we approached leading figures in a number of fields asking them to share with us their thoughts on the humanities over the past 200 years. The eight essays contained herein show the variety of perspectives we had hoped for as well as a depth and seriousness of concern that exceeded our hopes. Not all of the essays focus exclusively on the South: some look to the larger American experience, some in fact concern themselves with the future of all mankind; many focus on particular figures, while others address more general themes. Yet each is broad enough that their perspectives touch and blend, revealing a surprising commonalty of vision.

The experience of gathering and editing these essays has been an enjoyable and exciting one for us, and we would like to thank both our contributors and the people who made possible the publishing of this issue: The Auburn University Research Grant-in-Aid Committee, W. Kelly Mosley and Dr. Taylor D. Littleton of The Franklin Lecture Series, and, especially, the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration and the Alabama Bicentennial Commission.

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THE SOUTHERN NOVELIST AND THE USES OF THE PAST

By C. Hugh Holman

It is a cliché of cultural history that the South has been obsessed nearly to the point of madness with history, and it is assumed that the basic cause is the fact of the defeat of the South in the Civil War. The obsession is real, and the passionate remembrance of the Civil War is certainly one of its causes, but it has other roots as well. The persistent presence of this concern with history in fiction by southern writers is one of the most distinctive characteristics of that body of literary work, both early and late. Southern novelists in particular have seemed obsessed with time and the past.

When the novel was making its first impressive flowering in America in the decades before the Civil War, the dominant international models for fiction were the Waverley novels by Sir Walter Scott. In them the meaning of the present and the understanding of the future was, in one sense at least, the product of a comprehension of some pattern found in the events of the past. Scott had added to the English novel a profound dimension in time and had shown the western world the drama of man in relation to his society and to the interlinked meanings of the sequence of events in time.¹ When, however, American writers began to imitate "the Great Unknown,"—as the author of the then-anonymous Waverley novels was called—they found in the assumptions of American society and in the nature of the American experience a kind of implicit opposition to Scott's class-conscious and time-haunted social world. The pages of criticism by early American novelists from Charles Brockden Brown through Nathaniel Hawthorne are marked by laments about the paucity of the materials of America for the then fashionable romance. Furthermore, the nation not only lacked a past rich in tradition, legend, and long historical struggle, it had as its ideal a society based on principles of equality rather than of class and rank and on expansion in space rather than on growth in time.² Many people have observed the extent to which, in regard to the coordinates which define event, America, at least on a national basis, has tended to emphasize space rather than time. As Robert Penn Warren observed in his Jefferson lecture *Democracy and Poetry*, "In America . . . man did not feel a disorientation in his sense of time but a liberation from time. . . . Space replaced time as the prime category for [the American] citizen; and man, moving ever westward,

was redeemed from the past."³ "I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America," declared Charles Olson. "I spelled it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy."⁴

Thus American novelists following in Scott's footsteps had to make a radical shift in emphasis. The most successful of the American Scotts, James Fenimore Cooper, created the first great fictional figure in the "mythology" of the American novel in Natty Bumppo in *The Leatherstocking Tales*, and he made what was to prove to be the standard American substitution of space for time. For in these five novels, Natty Bumppo moves across the space of America from the Atlantic seaboard to the great western plains, existing always in that moment in history when the culture of the invading white man and that of the aboriginal Indian are decisively in conflict, so that the actions he participates in take place in a geographical space rather than Scott's point in time when two cultures are in conflict, one dying, the other struggling to be born. Natty Bumppo, from his early days as Deerslayer to the closing hours of his life as the Old Trapper, exists in an eternal Now, defined essentially by geography. Thus Scott's metaphor for time, "the neutral ground," in America becomes not metaphor but literal fact. This modification in the Scott formula, which in one sense removes time and history from the American experience, has been so persistently present in the national mind that the large, elaborate, and highly stylized mythology of the "Western" is, as its name suggests, fundamentally geographical in its coordinates.

Not so in the South. The southern followers of Sir Walter Scott remained far closer to the Scott formula and the Scott view of history than Cooper and his followers did. Where Cooper lamented the absence of annals for the historians and a storied past for the novelist, William Gilmore Simms, after Cooper the most important Scott follower in America and the leading antebellum southern man of letters, insisted that there existed ample material in American history for the purposes of art.⁵ Where Cooper, with the single exception of his failure *Lionel Lincoln*, dismissed history and instead repeated stylized and representative actions in changing locations, Simms, in most of his novels, and most notably in his ambitious project consisting of the seven loosely-linked romances of the Revolution, insisted upon precise history and exact records of events.

This deep concern with accurate history and with fiction as a means of preserving oral traditions and the records of the past has persisted in southern writing from those earliest days to the present. The standard American novel modified Scott, exchanging space for time, and later modified the social novel, making the individual's reaction to society

more important than the society that he is described as being in. Today we witness a passion on the part of many of our best novelists to locate the total arena of their actions in the inner psyche of a character. In contrast we find in the southern writer at all periods in his history a deep awareness of man in society and of society in time and a sense that meaning is a function not of the exploration of the inner self but of an exploration of the relationships existing in time and society among individual beings.

A part of the reason for this persistent interest has been attributed to the Civil War and the fact that the South, having lost it, has been unable to forget it. A part has been attributed to the fact that the South continued to buy, read, and imitate the novels of Sir Walter Scott long after the rest of the nation had put them by as mere entertainment for their adolescence, so that a writer like Mark Twain would blame the Civil War on the "Sir Walter disease."⁶

But the true roots are older and deeper than either of these. The South was from its beginnings an agricultural region, while the tendency of the northeastern colonies and states was always toward manufacturing industries; hence the great fights over tariff laws. The South not only was a region of farmers; it was also essentially agrarian in its philosophical and cultural definition.⁷ Every agrarian culture has a strong sense of family solidarity; kinship means much within it; and family Bibles with their records of births and deaths and personal transactions, like the great ledgers in William Faulkner's "The Bear," become in such societies repositories in miniature of the history of a place, a region, and a world. The South has been said to have a Shinto culture, and there is basis for the claim; for, like the Orientals, it defines the present in terms of its ancestors and the histories of its families.

Another reason for the South's concern with the past is tied to its economy. In the nineteenth century its agricultural staples were cotton and tobacco, crops which rapidly deplete the soil. Early in the nineteenth century, the awareness of this wearing out of the soil contributed a significant and dampening part to the sense in the South of a past rather than a present or a future glory. John Erskine, writing of the feeling created by Simms's "Romances" of the American Revolution says, "He dwelt lovingly upon his country's past, with a sad sense of faded glory. The young southerner now [in 1910] thinks of the days before the war as the happy prime of his state, and is melancholy over her lost battle fields, but in that very prime Simms was thinking as sadly of the bright days of Revolutionary honor."⁸ Edmund Ruffin in 1832 published his most important, but by no means most inflammatory, work, *An Essay on Calcareous Manures*. Its purpose was to improve agriculture and arrest

the forced westward migration of Tidewater planters.⁹ Readers of William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* will recall that in that novel it is the depletion of the soil in Tidewater Virginia and the consequent weakening of its economy which creates the economic problem out of which, in part, the events of 1831 occurred. The Golden Age of Charleston was in the eighteenth century. By the 1830's, not only were its great men shadowy memories, its commerce was suffering, and the economic history of that city was one of efforts to link itself by rail to the retreating West—by the first scheduled railroad line in the United States, by efforts to tunnel through the Blue Ridge Mountains, and in many other ways.¹⁰ When Williamsburg was reconstructed, it was quite appropriately rebuilt as it had stood in the days of colonial Virginia. The state that prided itself for over a century on being "the Mother of Presidents" was really the mother of early presidents, and the often praised intellectual life of Virginia was peculiarly eighteenth-century, embedded in the Enlightenment and reaching its flowering in the age of Thomas Jefferson.

As soil depletion and population growth forced the South to move steadily westward, it forced it physically away from the part of its past which seemed, even in the early years of the nineteenth century, to have been beneficent, orderly, and possessed of some of the qualities of magnificence. Thus, before the first third of the nineteenth century had passed, the South was bound emotionally to the lost world embedded in its own past. The southerner, whether in 1820, lamenting the days when there were giants strutting the streets of the seaport of Charleston, or in 1875 trying to remember with magnifying force the infinitely tall white columns of plantation houses, or in the 1930's in Nashville opposing the industrialism of the present world with an ideal agrarian order, was always possessed by a kind of Golden Age primitivism that was fundamentally conservative in cast, had a strong reverence for tradition, and seemed in certain respects to be like Scott's Tory nostalgia for a lost good world.

To these reasons for the South's obsession with history we must add the Civil War, for that event was a watershed in southern history and a crucial event for the southern imagination. Before that cataclysm there had been an Old South that was aristocratic in aspiration, however much the work of its world was done by its yeoman citizenry. It rested upon ideals of grace, honor, dignity, chivalry, and violence—all made possible by chattel slavery. Those interested in history as process can see in the sequence of the Old South, the Civil War, and the suffering and the agony of Reconstruction a greatly accelerated instance of the classical historical novelist's ideal moment, the moment of conflict between two cultures. It

was as though one of Scott's crucial ages had been compressed into a quarter of a century in which a civilization and a culture were defeated and violently displaced. The Civil War thus created for the southern novelist one of the great historical moments in which great ideals and ambitions find themselves realized in bloody and suddenly decisive conflict.

The Civil War and the Reconstruction which followed it also gave the South a lesson unique in American history, the experience of suffering and endurance. One of Saul Bellow's characters says, "When I say American I mean uncorrected by the main history of human suffering."¹¹ The South has not escaped that history, and its past is a constant reminder and explanation of its suffering. Out of that experience there has come for the southern writer a sense of the tragic implications of life and of history. This awareness is of a sort that a more optimistic and successful America was not to know until after the middle of the twentieth century.

The Civil War also brought together the three major historical themes which have been of deep concern to the southern novelists. One is the American Revolution, the major subject of the classical historical novel before the Civil War. Another is the Civil War itself, which, in the view of many southern people, was an unsuccessful revolution fought to achieve essentially the same purposes for the southern region that the thirteen colonies had set out to establish in 1776. This interpretation of the relation of the Civil War to the Revolution was not uncommon among southern writers.¹² Stark Young, for example, in *So Red the Rose* has a character ask, "Who did not know . . . that in the Revolution it was the South that had led in the fight for freedom, and freedom, therefore, was beyond all price?"¹³ And Ben Robertson, in his autobiographical *Red Hills and Cotton*, says of the attitude of his region, "We had lost the southern cause—the kind of country we had wanted, the sort of life we had created out of the earlier Revolution."¹⁴

The Civil War also underscored in blood and agony the third major historical theme—the plight of the black man in the region and the problem that his presence, his enslavement, and his second-class citizenship created for the entire region. Thus, centered sharply around the period between 1850 and 1875, southern history compressed into one challenging action three great historical themes: the Revolution, the Civil War, and the Negro. These themes have been naturally central to the work of writers seriously concerned with the moral and social qualities of life in their native region.

The southern novelists have also followed the broad fashions in technique and form that have been current in America and the western

world. Before the Civil War, when the historical romance was dominant and the Revolution was a major topic of American novelists, William Gilmore Simms, John Pendleton Kennedy, and John Esten Cooke were leaders in the creation of historical novels that owed unmistakable debts to the form of Scott, the fictional theories of Scott, and the events of the American experience. They differed from the national historical novelists only in their retention of a serious concern with time rather than space and in their concern with historical accuracy rather than imagined representative event. During this period the dominance of the historical romance in the South was not, therefore, unusual; the form was dominant throughout the nation.

In the period after the Civil War and into the 1930's, a dominant mode for American fiction was the realistic novel, particularly the novel of manners. During this period, when almost all the realists—particularly those in the camp of William Dean Howells and Henry James—embraced a descriptive presentation of the literal social world of their immediate time and place, southern historical novelists tended to use the methods of realism and the form of the novel of manners to describe not the present but the antebellum South, the catastrophe of the Civil War, and the events of Reconstruction. A host of novels were produced between 1875 and the 1930's that fall into the category of the historical novel of manners. Not strictly speaking historical novels in the classical sense, they deal significantly with the past and attempt to examine that past while employing, with varying degrees of thoroughness and seriousness, the methods of the realistic novel. There are many such southern novels, and I would indicate here only a few representative ones whose use of the past is, I believe, typical of several generations of southern novelists. Ellen Glasgow, in her thirteen *Novels of the Commonwealth*, traces the social history of Virginia from 1850 to 1940. It was her purpose to make the novel what she called, "a chronicle of manners, which is integrated by the major theme of social transition."¹⁵ In her hands it becomes a means of describing the aspects of a fragile culture in the moment of its attack, disintegration, and replacement. From the beginning of her career to its end, this view of social history and this concern with past events was pervasive.

Stark Young, in several novels but most notably in *So Red the Rose*, drew a lovingly detailed picture of life on neighboring plantations in Mississippi before, during, and just after the Civil War. *So Red the Rose* is historically accurate down to its smallest detail, but its final effect is not to describe a series of historical events so much as to create a rich tapestry of manners with, appropriately for the novelist's obvious nostalgia, a sense of loss at what has passed away. Another example is

the excellent and challenging novel of Allen Tate, *The Fathers*, which is an intricately conceived and beautifully executed delineation of the society of Virginia before and during the Civil War. It is presented to us through the memory of Lacy Buchan, who was an adolescent at the time of action and whose role in the story is primarily that of witness and recorder. He says, "I witnessed an accumulation of disasters that brought about in our lives changes that would otherwise have taken two generations."¹⁶ The emphasis in Tate's novel is upon the nature of those changes and the process by which they come about. The book seriously explores the issues of the individual in his relation to society and the dangers of attempts to be independent of social structures and traditions. In many ways it is, like Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead," an attack on solipsism and intense privacy and an insistence upon the interlocking relationships of men in the world. The significant thing for our purpose is not, however, the philosophical statements that the book ultimately makes but the fact that Tate elected to look back into the past and to utilize a picture of a special society as a means of making them.

Many such books have appeared ranging from the seriousness of works like Caroline Gordon's *None Shall Look Back* to very popular portraits of manners and changing customs, such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* and Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*. But during the whole period in which realism was the dominant literary mode, the southern novelist, more often than not, found in the application of the methods of the novel of manners to history his most effective way of making his statements about history, philosophical attitudes, or character.

Since the 1930's the best southern writers have turned their attention to the creation of novels that deal with moral and philosophical questions and are largely experimental in form. The contemporary novelist seems to feel, as Arthur Mizener has said, that "the representation of nature makes it impossible for him to express without falsification his strongest feelings," and thus he is willing "to sacrifice a probable presentation of the show of things to the direct expression of what the novelist thinks that things mean for the novelist."¹⁷ Hence the finest talents not only have deserted the classical form of the historical novel but also have deserted the realistic novel and the sub-genre of the novel of manners to engage in various experimental ways of making direct statements about issues that concern the world. The issues in which they are interested have been numerous and in most instances reasonably traditional: the relation of the individual to his society, which has been persistently the dominant theme of the realistic historical novel of manners; the question of whether we can know the past and of what history is and of how it

functions, questions which raise profound epistemological problems; the question of whether a meaningful pattern exists in history; and the persistent effort to understand and to expiate the collective and communal guilt which the region and its present denizens carry because of actions in its past.

In all these cases the southern past rests heavily upon the serious southern novelist as a burden to be borne and understood or as a collective guilt somehow to be recognized and expiated; and at the heart of this burden of guilt has been the presence of the Negro and the shame of his treatment, the experience of military defeat, military occupation, and Reconstruction, and the presence through much of the region of a bone-grawing poverty and hunger. This burden has created tragic issues for the serious novelist, and the strategies by which he has attempted to resolve them, or at least to state them clearly and honestly in the form of fiction, are varied, rewarding, and interesting. They have, with a reasonable consistency, involved the novelists' taking long looks into the past and into the representation of that past in novels that place major emphases upon movement in time, sequence of event, and causation and effect rather than upon human experience as though it were independent of the record of previous human activities.

There can be little question on anyone's part that the greatest southern novelist, William Faulkner, has a deep concern with the past history of his region. The very concept embodied in such a term as the "Yoknapatawpha Saga" rests upon a sense of time and history. For Yoknapatawpha County is a specific area with a specific population. What is important about it is not its spatial characteristics—though Faulkner has himself drawn maps for it—but that upon that "postage stamp of earth" has been enacted a history that becomes ultimately a fable of the moral and social condition of man. If we would understand ourselves we must know and respect our past, Faulkner seems to be saying over and over again; yet if we would live fruitfully in our present and create an effective future, we must not be, as was Gail Hightower in *Light in August*, the slaves of that past. But to know that past, Faulkner seems to be arguing in *Absalom, Absalom!*, we must piece together out of tiny, incomplete, and imperfect fragments a complicated story whose ultimate shape and meaning we can never fully know, for the past we can never truly comprehend. This persistent concern with what the past is, how we can know it, and what meaning it has for us have been present in Faulkner's work from its very beginning.

The second most challenging of twentieth-century southern writers is Robert Penn Warren, for whom the past is an inevitable part of every human experience and whose novels, with very few exceptions, have

rested upon the past and the interpretation of that past in moral and philosophical terms for the present. We are, Warren says in *World Enough and Time*, "like the scientist fumbling with a tooth and a thigh bone to reconstruct for a museum some great, stupid beast extinct with the Ice Age. Or we are the louse-bit nomad who finds, in a fold of land between his desert and the mountains, the ruin of parapets and courts, and marvels what kind of men have held the world before him. But at least we have the record: the tooth and thigh bone, or the kingly ruins."¹⁸ In *All the King's Men* Jack Burden, speaking as his author's surrogate, says, "I tried to tell her how if you could not accept the past and its burden there was no future, for without one there cannot be the other, and how if you could accept the past you might hope for the future, for only out of the past can you make the future."¹⁹ Warren, in his novels and in his poetry, notably in such works as *Night Rider*, *World Enough and Time*, *All the King's Men*, *Brother to Dragons*, and *Wilderness*, has used history as a subject to be brooded over in the search for profound meanings and has used the events of history as the means of stating and exploring the deepest truths of human experience. He would try to bring his readers, he suggests, toward what he calls "a simpler world" of which he says that it is "not a golden age but the past imaginatively conceived and historically conceived in the strictest reading of the researchers. The past is always a rebuke to the present . . . because historians will correct and imagination will correct any notion of a simplistic . . . golden age."²⁰ Warren is pre-eminently the living American poet and novelist of history. No other section of the nation than the South could have produced him.

In William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, we find another major southern talent turning back to the past and to an historical event in order to comprehend the meaning of history and to find in the past a meaningful image and an instructive moral for the present. Styron, in doing this, is acting in keeping with many of the best southern writers of the last fifty years who have sought new means of considering man in time and who have been overburdened in that dimension by the presence in the southern region of the black man. This novel, which its author calls "a meditation on history," is thoroughly modern in its concern with the inner self and its willingness to subordinate narrative logic to dramatic intensity; yet it expends these very contemporary methods on a slave uprising in Virginia in 1831.

The southern writer seems almost instinctively to have always known what Robert Penn Warren magnificently expressed in his 1974 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities: ". . . a society with no sense of the past, with no sense that the human role is significant not merely in experiencing history but in creating it, can have no sense of destiny. And what kind of

society is it that has no sense of destiny and no sense of self? That has no need or will to measure itself by the record of human achievement and the range of human endowment?"²¹ The southern novelist throughout his history has, I believe to his eternal glory, worked to keep such a sense of destiny before his region and his nation, and he has done it by insisting that man is a creature who can be understood only in terms of his immersion in time and the acts which have made him and which he in turn will make. Fixed upon his southern "postage stamp of earth," he sees meaning not through movement in space but through movement in time, and the self as ultimately defined against the pattern made in time by social history.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Boston, 1963), pp. 39-63, for an excellent treatment of this aspect of Scott's work; see also Avron Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore, 1971); and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (London, 1936), pp. 341-342.
2. For examples, see Charles Brockdon Brown, Preface, *Edgar Huntly; or, Memoirs of a Sleep-Walker* (New Haven, Conn., 1973), p. 29; James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans* (Philadelphia, 1828), Letter 28; Nathaniel Hawthorne, Preface, *The Marble Faun* (Columbus, Ohio, 1968).
3. Robert Penn Warren, *Democracy and Poetry* (New York, 1975), p. 64.
4. Charles Olson, *Call Me Ishmael* (New York, 1947), p. 11; see also pp. 114-119, where Olson elaborates on this apperception. See also Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," in *Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment*, ed. Mark Schorer, et al., pp. 379-392; and Philip Rahv, "The Myth and the Powerhouse," *Literature and the Sixth Sense* (Boston, 1969), pp. 202-215.
5. Cooper, *Notions of the Americans*, Letter 28; William Gilmore Simms, "The Epochs and Events of American History, as Suited to the Purposes of Art in Fiction," *Views and Reviews in American Literature, History and Fiction, First Series*, ed. C. Hugh Holman (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), pp. 30-127.
6. Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (New York, 1923), pp. 332-334, 374-376. On Scott's American and southern popularity, see Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: A History of Best-Selling Books in America* (New York, 1947), pp. 64-78; James D. Hart, *The Popular Book in America* (Berkeley, Calif., 1950), pp. 73-80; Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven, Conn., 1949), pp. 41-53.
7. Note, for example, the marked agrarianism of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) and of *The Arator* essays (1803) and *An Inquiry into the Principles and Policy of the Government of the United States* (1814), both by John Taylor of Caroline.
8. John Erskine, *Leading American Novelists* (New York, 1910), p. 177.
9. See J. Carlyle Sitterson, "Edmund Ruffin, Agricultural Reformer and Social Radical," in his edition of *Ruffin's An Essay on Calcareous Manures* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. vi-xxxiii.
10. George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Norman, Okla., 1969); William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina 1816-1836* (New York, 1966), pp. 7-48; Edmund Wilson, *Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the Civil War* (New York, 1962), pp. 439ff.; Louis B. Wright, *South Carolina: A Bicentennial History* (New York, 1976).

11. Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift* (New York, 1975), p. 300.
 12. John Esten Cooke refers to the Civil War as "the late Revolution" in *Surrey of Eagle's-Nest* (New York, 1866), p. 66, and in *The Wearing of the Gray* (New York, 1867), p. 352. He compares Lee with Washington, Mosby with Marion, and Hampton with the rebels against the Crown in the "old Revolution," in *The Wearing of the Gray*, pp. 59, 114, 357. He compares Federal Troops to British soldiers bent on subjugating America in *Surrey of Eagle's-Nest*, p. 13, in *Hilt to Hilt* (New York, 1869), p. 150, and in *The Wearing of the Gray*, p. 305.
 13. Stark Young, *So Red the Rose* (New York, 1953), p. 90.
 14. Ben Robertson, *Red Hills and Cotton* (New York, 1942), p. 26.
 15. Ellen Glasgow, *A Certain Measure: An Interpretation of Prose Fiction* (New York, 1943), p. 66.
 16. Allen Tate, *The Fathers* (Denver, Colo., 1960), pp. 125-126.
 17. Arthur Mizener, *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel* (Boston, 1964), pp. 268-269.
 18. Robert Penn Warren, *World Enough and Time* (New York, 1950), pp. 3-4.
 19. Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men* (New York, 1946), p. 461.
 20. Robert Penn Warren, in *Fugitive's Return: Conversations at Vanderbilt*, ed. Rob Roy Purdy (Nashville, Tenn., 1959), p. 210.
 21. Robert Penn Warren, *Democracy and Poetry*, p. 56.
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THE SOUTHERN LITERARY IMAGINATION AND THE PASTORAL MODE

By Lewis P. Simpson

I base my remarks on an encompassing idea: as we know it in Western literature the pastoral mode originated essentially in the poetic recognition of the historicity of a prehistorical—a cosmological—existence. This recognition occurred when the self-conscious, sophisticated poetic mind became aware that the integral or cosmic sensibility of poetry had been displaced in the differentiation of a historical sensibility; and in this awareness sought to discover and describe the relationship between two experiences: the experience, now lost but recorded in the continuum of consciousness, of a cosmological mode of existence, and the experience of the disparate, eventful historical mode of existence. This effort is dramatized in Theocritean pastoral of the third century B. C., in which a primordial sensibility—a compact or unmediated perception of existence—is recovered through its isolation in the poetic consciousness. The recovery is stylized and symbolic but seems credible, for the awareness of historical existence is not admitted to the *Idylls*. Theocritus, although he was a city dweller living in history, suggests that the poet may directly experience a recovered cosmological sensibility.

In his *Eclogues* (37 B.C.) Virgil, citizen of the first world historical city and himself the first world historical poet (who later made his world historical consciousness overtly clear when he composed the *Aeneid*) takes the recovery of the cosmological sensibility in Theocritus as his model; but in subtle repudiation of his model implies that in the ironic complexities of the pastoral poem a self-conscious recovery of the cosmic apprehension of existence is incredible. Such a sensibility has become unredeemably historical. The order of reality, Virgil tacitly acknowledges, is empirical history. Poetic capacity is inherent in the historical situation of the poet. In her study of the *Eclogues*, Eleanor Winsor Leach says:

The variety of nature is the basis for the complexities of the *Eclogues*. The poems have no consistent landscape. No one image stands out as typically pastoral. Their world is created as a microcosm of nature, offering the contrasts that nature offers to the eye. But in creating his varied landscapes, Virgil is also conscious of their symbolic potential, of parallels between nature and man. Like the faces of nature, the emotions of men are varied and inconsistent. The four modes of landscape in the poems have associations with patterns of conduct and thought; the farm with man's desire for order, the rustic world with his anxieties and uncertainties, the wilderness with his uncontrolled passions, and the *locus amoenus* with his fantasies and his urge for with-

drawal. The cultivated field, the wilderness, and paradise are territories of the human mind. In the midst of his varied landscapes, the poet explores man's nature as an emotional and a historical being, and traces the conflicts of order and disorder that beset his affairs to their deep beginnings in human thought.¹

Virgil offers no possibility of the literal recovery of a primordial sensibility in the poet's perception of the world. In the *Eclogues* the landscape becomes a literary artifice; poetic wit renders it as a symbol of the differentiated consciousness. The cosmological landscape, reduced to the elements of the "wilderness" and the *locus amoenus*, or "paradise," becomes a part of landscape as a metaphor of historical mind, of its awareness of the polarities of order and disorder and the need to reconcile them. In a deliberate reversal of landscape as a metaphor of a unified primordial sensibility, Virgil implies that it is an image of the separation of feeling and expression, of a dissociation of sensibility, of a dispossession by history of the organic imagination or of the original poetic comprehension. Indeed in Virgil's *Eclogues* the submerged conceit of the poetic mind or consciousness as a cosmic garden dispossessed by history expresses a relationship between poetry and history that has haunted Western literature. The tantalizing possibility, all the more tantalizing because incredible, of the repossession of organic perception—of an intervention of the primordial sensibility in the historically conditioned consciousness—has been a major motive in the long and persistent devotion to the pastoral mode. But the imperative has not been to recover a verifiable primitive sensibility but its sophisticated symbol, the land of Arcadia. Abstracted from its specific context in the Virgilian metaphor of mind, Arcadia—which is only one part of the Virgilian landscape—has for centuries symbolized the original poetic consciousness as a pastoral garden dispossessed by history.

Only at one point in the long devotion to the pastoral mode—in the time of the English settlement of the new world and in the subsequent age of the development of the United States of America—has the intervention of a recovered cosmological sensibility in the literary imagination seemed to be a credible possibility. The reason for this is to be found not in a reduction of historical awareness in the poet's mind at this point but in the greater complexity of this awareness. What may be referred to as a second stage in the differentiation of history has been reached. The unified sensibility afforded by the Christian myth—which had succeeded the Roman differentiation of history and the Roman world view and had reunified perception (not in a cosmological but in a hierarchical existence)—was yielding to the differentiation of the modern sense of history. The modern differentiation (marking the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries) embraced both the recovery of the classical world and the discovery of a world (America) still existing in the

cosmological age. A renewal of the classical pagan sensibility encouraged the idea that contact with the new world meant that the recovery of a transforming primordial sensibility might be effected in the literary imagination. But the form this would take was heavily influenced by the Virgilian metaphor for the life of the imagination. America emerged in the poetic consciousness as Arcadia. A more complex Arcadia than the Virgilian Arcadia, invested with compelling aspects of the Hebraic-Christian image of Eden, America appeared to represent a concrete opportunity to modify, or escape from, the historical image of existence. It offered to become an embodiment of the intervening of an ahistorical pastoral mode of existence in the poetic consciousness. Juxtaposed between the sense of a lost cosmic mode of existence and the recognition of the historical mode, America promised to become the image of a pastoral reversal of historical consciousness.

The development and permutations of the image of America as Arcadia are phenomena which, owing to the brilliant descriptive analysis in Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*, are well known. Marx shows how, in the emergence of an American literary vision out of the European pastoral vision of America, a pagan literary cosmos becomes transcendently credible. It becomes the basis of an American pastoral ideology, one which visualizes the American destiny as the transformation of the continent into, as Marx says, "a well-ordered green garden" dotted with self-sufficient farms and villages—"a chaste, uncomplicated land of rural virtue," conforming to Jefferson's paradigmatic concept (expressed in the nineteenth query of the *Notes on the State of Virginia*) of American yeoman farmers as the chosen people of God. Jefferson envisions America, to use Henry Nash Smith's famous phrase in *Virgin Land*, as the Garden of the World.

It follows from their emphasis on the American receptiveness to a literary illusion that both Marx and Smith should be concerned about its adverse influence on American culture: the harmful political and social consequences of a pastoral distortion of the historical reality of America. One can hardly dispute this concern. Let me, however, offer a brief, schematic but, I hope, clarifying comment on the theme of pastoral credibility in the American literary mind. In attempting to define the phenomenon of American pastoralism, I would suggest, we discover a motive in this mind less easily definable than the presumptive reality of America as the Arcadian artifice. This reveals itself, I think, as a counter motive: a dramatic questioning of the credibility of America as an Arcadian interposition in the consciousness of history. Such a drama occurs in the literary imagination when the impulse to a recovery of cosmic sensibility encounters a tendency to historical determinism in the

modern differentiation of history which is more demanding and more decisive than it is in the stage of differentiation experienced by Virgil.

Occurring primarily in the Southern literary mind, this encounter manifests itself in writers from Robert Beverley to William Faulkner, who represents its culmination and, in all probability, its effective conclusion.

This is not to say that the dramatic contention I speak of is recorded only in writers of the South. Its occurrence in New England writers is striking, but, as contrasted with its early implication in the Southern literary vision, its appearance in Henry Adams and Robert Frost and others is belated. For a long time—for nearly three centuries, to be sure—the credibility of America as an image of pastoral recovery was envisioned by the New England mind as the revealed mission of a spiritual elect. Whether this mission had in view an America envisioned as a "pleasure garden of the Lord God of Hosts," or, in the aftermath of the Puritan vision, as a transcendental cosmos (Thoreau's *Walden*), it assumed the supratemporal character of consciousness and the fulfillment of the aspiration to an ideal world of mind or spirit. "In the end," Leo Marx comments, "Thoreau restores the pastoral hope to its traditional location. He removes it from history, where it is manifestly unrealizable, and relocates it in literature, . . . in his own consciousness, in his craft, in *Walden*."³ Thoreau in a sense dealt with empirical history in the Virgilian way, but in a deeper sense he dealt with it in the New England way: he located it in a divinized human consciousness, the mirror of the immanentization of the Kingdom of God in New England. To the extent that New England was the education of the nation—and this was to a considerable extent—the New England tendency in the nineteenth century to a millennialistic, or gnostic, projection of its mission was embraced in the image of America as the Garden of the World.

But by and large the Southern literary mind did not participate in the divinization of the secular consciousness and thus did not envision a coalescence of the Kingdom of God and the Garden of the World as a way of substituting for the loss of a revealed history. In fact, in so far as the Southern imagination has its origins in the first Southern settlement, the Virginian, it begins with the acceptance of this loss as a necessity of Virginia's involvement in the empirical development of the modern market place economy. When Massachusetts was still being settled as a Holy Commonwealth, Perry Miller has pointed out, Virginia had assumed that its role in history was to propagate not the gospel but tobacco.⁴ Divested of the credibility of a messianic pastoralism, the

literary response to the meaning of colonial Virginia was more open to the Arcadian impulse than the literary response to Massachusetts. But the response to Virginia was also more open to the force of modern historical interpretation. The literary possibilities of this situation were forecast in Michael Drayton's celebration of Virginia in "To the Virginian Voyage" (1606). Drayton describes Virginia as the recovery of "Earth's only paradise/. . . To whom the Golden Age/ Still nature's laws doth give," but makes the recovery of paradise the fulfillment of heroic imperialism.

Whenas the luscious smell
Of that delicious land,
Above the seas that flows,
The clear wind throws,
Your hearts to swell
Approaching the dear strand,

In kenning of the shore,
(Thanks to God first given,)
O you, the happi'st men,
Be frolic then,
Let cannons roar,
Frighting the wide heaven.

And in regions far
Such heroes bring ye forth
As those from whom we came,
And plant our name
Under that star
Not known unto our north.

And as there plenty grows
Of laurel everywhere,
Apollo's sacred tree,
You may it see
A poet's brows
To crown, that may sing there.⁵

In Drayton's poem the image of Virginia as a pastoral realm fails to intervene in the poet's consciousness of the historicity of the colony. The poet implies, furthermore, that the image of a pastoral paradise is no more than a convention, in itself a historical phenomenon. A century later the tension between the Arcadian recovery and the commitment to the historical view is dramatized in the consciousness of Robert Beverley, whose *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705) is a remarkable embodiment of the drama of the literary mind in colonial Virginia. Beverley assumes three distinguishable voices in his book. One is the admonitory voice of the master of Beverley Park, the man of letters and the law, who aspires to make Virginia a pastoral autonomy. Another voice is that of Beverley the "Indian." He declares in his Preface: "I am an *Indian*, and I don't pretend to be exact in my Language: But I hope the Plainness of my Dress, will give . . . the kinder Impressions of my Honesty, which is what I pretend to."⁶ A third voice in Beverley's

History—composed perhaps of some combination of the voice of Beverley the man of letters on his pastoral plantation and the voice of Beverley the honest Indian—speaks with something of the intonation of the world historical poet. Describing a Virginia sadly altered but not improved by the English settlers—who have destroyed the Indian cosmos, lost the communal life they had known in England, and begun to degenerate into an economy of wastrels—this voice gives the impression of a possibly complete differentiation of the history of Virginia from the sensibility of cosmic unity or any form of mythic transcendence. It identifies Virginia as belonging to the unfolding process of an agrarian capitalism in a world market place society. In his later years Beverley attempted to make his own personal existence the representation of Virginia as a pastoral cosmos. Decrying the Virginian dependence on tobacco, he cultivated grapes as an alternate crop, and imitated the Indians in the spartan economy of his life at Beverley Park. But the rapid growth of chattel slavery in the eighteenth century made it more and more difficult for Southern writers to imagine the plantation as a pastoral dominion, the plantation being in fact not only subservient to the imperial, and hence the world, commodity market, but increasingly dependent on the world slave market.

It was, I surmise, in response to the truly terrifying vision of Virginia's historical involvement in chattel slavery (dealt with in the eighteenth query of the *Notes on the State of Virginia*) that Jefferson (in the nineteenth query) envisions the American yeoman farmers as the chosen people of God, and the economically independent and spiritually self-fulfilling farm as Arcadia incarnate in America. The reaction of a world historical mind like Jefferson to the historical fact of chattel slavery in America led to the interposition in his imagination of the paradigmatic image of American pastoral.

But it was an image opposed to the South's dominant institution, the slave plantation. The historicity of slavery greatly inhibited the literary imagination in the South. While confused efforts to make the plantation the symbol of a pastoral intervention in historical consciousness do not represent the whole of the effort to write fiction about the plantation, they indicate the frustration of Simms and others in the pursuit of the Arcadian imperative. In one important direction the awareness of the imperative of history in the South fostered literary power. I refer to the writings of the Southern humorists, especially to the works of the greatest ones, George Washington Harris and Mark Twain. In Harris and Mark Twain the subversion of a pastoral intervention in the American literary consciousness by the recognition of history becomes the consummate subject of our literature.

The Sut Lovinggood stories by Harris are an elaborate parody of the pastoral opposition to history. Sut is an inversion of the American bucolic nobleman, the Jeffersonian farmer. In another, more significant, if less definite, dimension he is a parodic figure of Pan, the goat god of cosmic pastoral. We take delight in the vivid poetic movement of Sut's language as the narrator of his own stories, seeming as it does to display an absolute reintegration of sensibility, not only in a minute faithfulness to the vernacular of Sut's society but through a violent destruction of conventional language. Yet in the Sut Lovinggood stories not only does a genteel narrator's surrender of the storytelling to a vernacular narrator dramatize the historical character of language but Sut's self-conscious figuration of his role as an "orthur" (he writes both a "Preface" and a "Dedicator" to his book) defines his storytelling as a part of cultural history.⁷ In the historicity of his speech and function Sut mocks the possibility of a cosmological reintegration of word and thing. His stories record no renaissance of a pastoral cosmos in America—no deconstruction of history, no reunification of religion, law, and sexuality under the aspect of a transcending myth. On the contrary, Sut experiences the modern incorporation of religion and sexuality in a necessitarian historical process. He confronts the religiosity and sexuality of history. Even under the crude conditions of a world on the margins of settled society, conformist attitudes toward religion and sex repress Sut's outlaw urge to renew the cosmic unity of nature and spirit. Sut's opponents like Parson Bullen and Sicily Burns (whose first name satirically echoes Theocritean pastoral) are instrumentalities of historical necessity. Locked in the brutal society of the Southern semi-frontier, Sut embodies the consciousness of a society which is post-Enlightenment but not, like the society of New England, romantic. As he rebels against his society, Sut accepts his nature as a creature of history.

So does Huckleberry Finn. Much has been made of that moment on the raft when Huck commits his soul to hell in order to save Jim. It has been taken as a moment when transcendent natural or pastoral virtue intervenes in Huck's bondage to history (his conscience). But immediately after he comes close to a transcendent confirmation of historical society as a tissue of lies, Huck lapses into the comforting historicity of his moral condition. He will "go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again," for it is just the kind of thing he ought to do, being "brung up" to wickedness.⁸ The historical society governed by its self-serving conventions of right and wrong is Huck's home. He cannot breathe on the level of suprahistorical moral deliberation. Like Sut a self-conscious vernacular author, Huck is not a victim of history. Historian of the inner history of the history of his world, he is the creature of history. He lives in the

historicism of consciousness. When he says that he will light out for the territory to escape civilization, he knows the futility of the gesture. The irony of making the gesture confirms the incredibility of an American Arcadia beyond the power of the literary imagination to reverse it.

And yet the ironic drama of the redemption of the American literary consciousness from historicism through the intervention of a recovered pastoral sensibility was still to reach its culminating point. This happens in the spacious, entangled work of Faulkner, which begins with his vision of the poet as a dispossessed, solipsistic faun in *The Marble Faun* and comes to its climax in two stories based on the Southern differentiation of the modern historical sensibility from the dream of an American incarnation of the pastoral cosmos, "The Bear" and *The Hamlet*. The dominant voice in these works is that of Faulkner the world historical poet; the voice is comparable in power to that of Virgil. In *The Hamlet*, the most concentrated evocation of the drama of pastoral and history in American literature, spirits dispossessed from Pan's garden—Will Varner, Eula Varner, Ike Snopes, and others—are brought into various relationships with that epitome of modern historicism, Flem Snopes. Flem personifies the rank result of the historicity of consciousness, the bourgeois conscience in full and flagrant bloom. He symbolizes, this is to say, the death of poetic consciousness, which is the death of the soul. In the amazingly intricate contrast between the pastoral and historical modes of existence that Faulkner manages in *The Hamlet*, we experience the ultimate irony of America as a pastoral intervention in historical consciousness as we are caught up in an exquisitely elegiac, beautifully credible parodic pastoral devoted to the subject of cow diddling. And we grasp the final incredibility of the pastoral dream in the terrifying vision of the sexuality of history which rises before us when the impotent Flem departs from Frenchman's Bend with his bride, Eula, the fertility goddess herself, on their way to Jefferson and their immutable destinies as creatures of history.

As we know, Faulkner rebelled against his impulsion to the historical nature of community and the historicism of the individual consciousness, and in subsequent episodes of the Snopes trilogy confers on Flem the grace of the literary artist (which is hardly the same as the grace of God) and gives him a soul. In the killing of Flem by his brother Mink, the world historical poet who narrates the trilogy encompasses Flem in the poetry of humanity. Flem, it would seem, has done what he had to do, not as a societal automaton but as a human being with a heart subject to the driving pressures of history. But although Faulkner tried to make her represent the human heart under such pressures, he could not make Eula credible as a citizen of Jefferson. He could really do nothing for a goddess

displaced in history. In a frustration she did not comprehend and that Faulkner could not resolve, Eula kills herself.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Virgil's Eclogues: Landscapes of Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 112. Insisting on the specifically Roman context of the *Eclogues*, Professor Leach illuminates Virgil's implied recognition of the differentiation of history from a prehistorical mode of existence. I adapt her remarks to my own argument, I trust not willfully so. The present essay affords a commentary on certain aspects of my study entitled *The Dispossessed Garden: Pastoral and History in Southern Literature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975). More particularly it offers a deliberate refinement, intensification, and enlargement of the focus on Southern historicism in my recent article entitled "Faulkner and the Southern Symbolism of Pastoral," *Mississippi Quarterly*, 28 (Fall 1975), 401-15. References to some of the same illustrative materials is essential to the revisionary intention. In its original form my essay was read to the American Section, Modern Language Association of America, on December 27, 1975, upon the invitation of the Section chairman, Professor Richard Beale Davis. I am indebted to Professor Davis for his helpful comments on my several inquiries into the subject of pastoral and Southern letters. I acknowledge a general indebtedness to Eric Voegelin, *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954-1975), especially Volumes I, IV.
 2. Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 141. See Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950. Reissued with a new Preface, 1970), especially pp. 123 ff.
 3. Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, p. 265.
 4. Miller, "Religion and Society in the Early Literature of Virginia," in *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1964), pp. 99-140.
 5. *Oxford Anthology of English Poetry*, ed. Howard Foster Lowry and Willard Thorp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 233-34.
 6. Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia*, ed. Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 9.
 7. Harris, *Sut Lovingood's Yarns*, ed. M. Thomas Inge (New Haven: College & University Press, 1966), pp. 25-30.
 8. Huck's debate with himself about Jim occurs in the thirty-first chapter of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
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THE UNFULFILLED DREAM: CHARLES W. CHESNUTT AND THE NEW SOUTH MOVEMENT

By Wayne Mixon

Even as Union armies were sealing the fate of the Old South in 1865, there were men speaking of a New South. In unlikely places such as Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans, bastions of the Old Order, and in the newer towns of Atlanta and Birmingham, optimists took hope from defeat, envisioning a society which, if less grand on the surface, would be sounder at the center than the plantation order of the antebellum South. These men held a common resolve once again to make the South strong and respected by the nation. The cornerstone of regional restoration, they believed, was a firm economic foundation fashioned around industrialism.

As Reconstruction ended in the middle seventies, the New South movement gained strength. The advocates of industrialism got support from Northern capitalists, who helped finance business ventures in the South. Expansion began in iron and steel, textiles, lumbering, and other industries. Railroad mileage increased. The region was making a start toward economic recovery.

But the industrial promoters claimed too much. Forty years after the war the South was still the poorest section of America, and in some economic indices her position relative to the rest of the country had declined. The New South movement, however, had created its own mythology. It had undergone a metamorphosis: a program of action begun after the war to lift up the depressed South had become, as early as 1890, a declaration of triumph depicting a South already enjoying her golden age of prosperity. The movement's emphasis changed from what could be done to what had been done.¹

As New South spokesmen labored, in fact, to transform a rural, agricultural society into an urban, industrial one, they made sure to pay respects to the Old South. Nowhere is this looking two ways more apparent than in Henry W. Grady's address "The New South." In the course of this speech before New York's New England Society, Grady praised the civilization of the Old South, honored the heroes in gray who went to work rebuilding, insisted the South had nothing to apologize for, and declared that Southerners, having fallen in love with work, would out-Yankee the Yankees in storing up wealth.²

The South, and the North, extolled the Atlanta editor. He became "a hero all the way from Boston to Galveston." Southerners named their sons for him. Democrats considered him for the vice-presidency. Other publicists echoed his ideas: Richard H. Edmonds in Baltimore, Francis W. Dawson in Charleston, Henry Watterson in Louisville, to name a few of the more prominent.³

Many creative writers also endorsed Grady's program. Paul Hamilton Hayne, a lingering literary cavalier, stopped memorializing the Old South long enough to support briefly the New Order. Later, the popular and prolific novelists Will N. Harben of Georgia and Thomas Dixon, Jr., of North Carolina envisioned Piedmont utopias of thriving industries and bustling towns. Even a plantation romancer like Thomas Nelson Page conjured up a Virginia building factories, while, of course, she restored mansions.⁴

But other writers demurred. Though Mark Twain, as reporter, could admire the industrial progress of the New South, as novelist, he went beneath the surface of that society and exposed its unseemly aspects, its political corruption and business chicanery. George W. Cable objected particularly to the bluster of New South promoters, to the New Order's failure to include the black man in its benefaction, and to its extravagant promises of prosperity. By 1900, however, personal misfortunes turned Mark Twain's thoughts away from the South; and growing indifference to Cable's appeals for equity led him to think the battle for Southern uplift lost and to abandon the protest novel.⁵

There remained, though, a younger writer of considerable talent who assumed the task of criticizing the New South's complacency to social ills and questioned its claims of economic revival. Though he was born in the North and styled himself "an Ohio novelist," Charles Waddell Chesnutt grew up in North Carolina and was, as Julian D. Mason, Jr., has pointed out, a Southern writer "in the best sense of that term."⁶ That is to say, Chesnutt wrote *about* the South, not *for* the South. He declined to give Southerners the literary pabulum long served them. He refused to defend the region's shortcomings, hoping instead to excise them by facing them openly and presenting them realistically in his fiction. Like the better regional writers of a later day, Chesnutt at once loved and was angered by the South. And he brought a new perspective to the literary treatment of the New South, that of the man most neglected by the New Order, the Negro.

A boy of eight when he moved from Cleveland to Fayetteville in 1866, Chesnutt lived in North Carolina until his twenty-fifth year. After studying at the Howard School, he became a teacher there at the age of

fourteen. He amplified his formal schooling by reading avidly in the bookshop of a local white man and by listening to the stories told by patrons of his father's store. During the mid-seventies he taught in country schools around Charlotte and in 1877 returned to Fayetteville to become assistant principal of the new State Colored Normal School. When the principal died three years later, Chesnutt took that position, having been recommended highly by the white leaders of Fayetteville.⁷

But the young educator, successful on his side of the color line, was dissatisfied. Though he could write in 1879 that the white people of Fayetteville were "very well disposed" toward the Negroes, he chafed under the distinctions arbitrarily imposed by racial segregation.⁸ Of light skin, he had as an adolescent considered leaving North Carolina and "passing" as a white man. In 1883 he did leave, but as a Negro, resolved, as he put it earlier, to help his race secure "recognition and equality."⁹

Authorship, Chesnutt believed, would provide a way to work for that goal. By writing fiction he hoped not only to fashion something aesthetically pleasing but also to serve a social purpose, to elevate white men by attacking "the unjust spirit of caste."¹⁰ Within two years of his return to Cleveland in 1883, he was publishing stories and sketches in the periodical press. Though he often set these early pieces in Northern cities, Carolina stayed on his mind. His years in the South had made a deep impression on his imagination. Consequently, as he continued to write he dealt more and more with that area of eastern North Carolina where he had grown to manhood.

The bulk of Chesnutt's fiction treats racial themes. His goals were primarily two: to shatter stereotypes of the Negro created by the plantation romancers and to present his readers with a new point of view—from the bottom of society.¹¹ He succeeds, largely through the character of Uncle Julius McAdoo, an old former slave who tells stories of life on antebellum plantations through a frame supplied by the Northern white narrator for whom Julius works in North Carolina. Uncle Julius lives by his wits, telling stories not only because he enjoys doing so but also to secure material benefits. Through his tales he gains possession of an old building for fellow church members, gets choice victuals from his employer's wife, saves his nephew from being permanently fired, protects a chicken-thief from prosecution, and shelters his own productive beehive.¹²

Though after being freed Julius declines to leave the land where he grew up, unlike the Negroes of plantation romance, he is no apologist for the old regime. As the white narrator says, Julius "never indulged in any regrets for the Arcadian joyousness and irresponsibility which was [sic] a

somewhat popular conception of slavery." On the contrary, even his fantastic stories of conjuration often attack directly the peculiar institution. The misfortunes that befall the characters in those stories and others occur because as slaves those characters have little control over their own lives. The author's point of view contrasts sharply with that of the plantation romancers whose Negro characters suffer only after they become free men.¹³

In Chesnutt's stories even the old-time darkies refuse to sentimentalize the Old Order. For example, Aunt Jemima Belfontaine, a white folks' Negro if ever there was one, states flatly that "Dem ole times wuzn't ev'ything dey wuz cracked up fer."¹⁴ There is also the allegorical story of an old black vagrant whose preposterous tale of the glories of slavery is obviously satiric. This nameless old man recalls that, as the manservant of Julius Caesar, he had saved his master's life in battle. In gratitude Caesar gave him a quarter and provided for his gradual emancipation so that he would be free at the age of 100. With a sigh the old man adds, "Ah, but dem wuz good ole times!"¹⁵

What were good old times to the plantation romancers were to Chesnutt "those horrid days before the war."¹⁶ And, as he shows in his works dealing with the postbellum South, conditions had improved but little since the war. In one story, Uncle Peter, a freedman living in the Carolina Sandhills, resolves to build a place of his own. But his efforts are beset with misfortune. Having saved a little money, he buys fifteen acres of cut-over pineland from a Northern turpentine producer because no white Southerner will sell to him. Persuaded by another white man to buy a mule, Peter sharecrops with the man to pay for the animal. It is a costly year. A merchant overcharges him for supplies; rust gets in his cotton; his mule dies. After paying off the twenty-dollar debt the year's sharecropping brought him, Peter is forced to mortgage his land to meet legal fees for a son who has run afoul of the authorities. Still refusing to give up, the old Negro disposes of the mortgage and begins to build a house. Once he has erected the frame, a group of Ku Kluxers out for a "little fun" burn it, tying Peter to a nearby tree and making him watch. But the old man will not quit and resumes work on the house. The structure is almost complete when Peter, while working on the roof, falls to his death.¹⁷ If the author stretches probability by the sheer number of Peter's reversals, each misfortune of itself is nevertheless credible.

Even more pathetic is the fate of Ben Davis. A hardworking, property-owning blacksmith in a small Carolina town, Ben is accused falsely of stealing by another Negro, Tom, who covets Davis's wife. After a half-hearted defense by his attorney, Ben is found guilty and jailed. Puzzled

and dismayed, he attempts unsuccessfully to escape and is sent to the state penitentiary for five years. Upon release he returns home, a broken man, to find himself forgotten, his wife living with Tom, his daughter drowned, and his son lynched. Shortly thereafter, he is killed by Colonel Thornton, a white man who mistakenly thinks Ben is molesting his daughter.¹⁸

Although Tom is the catalyst of Ben's misery, the blame, Chesnutt implies, rests ultimately on a community too willing to forget Ben's accomplishments and believe the worst of him. Like Uncle Peter, Ben had tried to rise in the world, to do what friends of the black man said he must do to earn the respect of white men. But, according to Chesnutt, the one thing the postwar South despised more than a failed Negro was a successful one.

As portrayed in Chesnutt's fiction, the New South is a place opposed to the Negro's economic advancement. In the 1880's the white leaders of Patesville (Fayetteville) refuse to hire blacks to work in stores and factories. It is impossible for a Negro to become a doctor or a lawyer. The only ways out of the fields are by preaching and teaching, professions that respect the color line and pay little in hard cash.¹⁹

If the Negro found it difficult to improve his condition in the postwar South, so, too, Chesnutt maintained, did the white man. Blaming the region's stagnation primarily upon attitude, upon the survival of the spirit of slavery, Chesnutt believed that the debasement of labor, the exclusion of Negroes from certain jobs, and the persistence of caste were hostile to progress.²⁰ Like Cable, he hoped that prosperity would serve the higher goal of an equitable society, would produce a "new order of things," in which men were judged upon character rather than upon color, family ties, or financial worth.²¹

Chesnutt envisions the ideal New Order in his last published novel, *The Colonel's Dream*.²² Set in North Carolina in the 1890's, the story deals with the efforts of one man to bring prosperity, enlightenment, and human equality to his native region. A Confederate colonel at nineteen, Henry French moves to New York after the war and by middle age becomes the owner of a profitable burlap company. After his wife's death, French sells his business and returns to North Carolina, partly to restore the health of his ailing young son Philip but also to see how his birthplace has changed. Clarendon of the 'nineties, he discovers, contrasts poorly with the town he knew as a boy. Trade languishes; the few industries exploit the people and the land; the very air reeks of decay.

Uncomfortable with his own success and the town's failure, Colonel French commits his fortune to improving Clarendon. He goes about

building schools and libraries and renovating factories. These projects give work to the men of Clarendon, black and white. But in his attempts to make life better, the Colonel collides with William Fetters. Of poor-white ancestry, Fetters is Chesnutt's idea of the new man of the New South. He is a prototypal Flem Snopes who exploits free white labor in his cotton mills, abuses black convict labor on his plantation, and intends to keep his grip on Clarendon at all costs. Fetters's henchmen work to enflame the local whites against French.

That task is made easier when the Colonel violates the racial code. Though white men grudgingly work with Negroes on French's projects, they quit *en masse* when French replaces a defiant white foreman with a black man. From then on, the story of the Colonel's plans is largely one of frustration and failure.

Coupled with reversals in the public realm, misfortune strikes French's private life when his son and his old black manservant Peter are killed in a train accident. Still, he strives to give substance to his vision until the white men of Clarendon exhume Uncle Peter's body from the French plot in the white cemetery. Angry and bitter, the Colonel sees the futility of his mission and returns to New York.

The Colonel's Dream is Chesnutt's catalogue of the South's ills. As Henry French fights convention in Clarendon, so his creator attacks the popular view of the New South movement and its leaders, singling out Henry Grady and denouncing him as a white supremacist.²³ He portrays the postwar South as a land sustaining and even honoring men like William Fetters while rejecting wise and far-sighted leaders like Colonel French. Fetters is out to help himself; French, to help the South. The people they live among are too rooted in tradition to tell the difference.

The Southern traditions emphasized in Chesnutt's fiction were unrecognizable to readers of properly "Southern" writers—authors who did nothing but praise the region. To be sure, the postwar South, Chesnutt made clear, received a legacy of graciousness, charm, and *noblesse oblige*. There are old aristocrats in his works who are admirable characters.²⁴ But Chesnutt's South is primarily a land of ignorance, indolence, and intolerance.

In part, Clarendon and Beaver County are backward because, unlike the white characters in Dixon's and Harben's works, the people are lazy.²⁵ The men much prefer talk to work. Chesnutt's is not the leisured South of the Plantation Tradition, but a land made slothful, even shiftless, by the vestigial effects of slavery with its debasement of labor. The picture of Clarendon upon French's arrival reminds one of the squalid

river towns in *Huckleberry Finn*. Cows graze on the main street, pigs wallow by the old market house, "lean and sallow pinelanders and listless negroes [doze] on the curbstone." Even the trees with their "rusty trunks and scant leafage [seem] to have shared in the general decay."²⁶

Clarendon is not alone. The town of Carthage forty miles away, though smaller, houses Excelsior Mills, Fetter's textile enterprise. Even so, Carthage wears "a neglected air." The men of the town spend much of their time at the depot watching the trains come in. At the nearby mill village, while the women and children are inside the plant working amid lint and snuff drippings for as little as fifteen cents a day, the men sit languidly among dirty babies, swarming flies, and yellow dogs. But the South has a ready explanation for this condition. She lays the blame elsewhere—upon "the War, the carpetbaggers, the Fifteenth Amendment, the Negroes. . . . Effort was paralysed where failure was so easily explained."²⁷

If the South is indolent, she is also, says Chesnutt, plutocratic.²⁸ Most residents of Clarendon admire and fear Bill Feters. He is the poor boy made good. He has gained both wealth and the power which accompanies it. That he has done so by devastating the pine forests with turpentine stills and by degrading humanity in his mills and fields seems not to bother the people of North Carolina.²⁹

According to Chesnutt's description of the advent of the poor whites, Feters and his kind literally swarm out of the pine barrens, taking control of the state and implicitly of the whole South. As they come to power in the wake of war and Reconstruction, the South ossifies, subscribes to what W. J. Cash later called the "savage ideal," becomes intolerant of even the slightest deviation from convention.³⁰ A few of the old gentry fight a rear-guard action but are hopelessly outmanned.

While the new men push the old master class into obscurity, they ruthlessly set about stripping the Negro of his humanity. On the weakest of charges, officials of Clarendon send black men to the tortures of Feters's plantation as convict laborers. No breach of the racial arrangement will be tolerated, even the burial of obsequious old Uncle Peter beside the white boy whose life he tried to save. For "such an example of social equality," says Clarendon's mayor, a man of poor-white stock, might undermine "the purity and prestige of our race."³¹ When Colonel French confronts such an attitude rapidly being institutionalized, he is bound to fail.

Despicable as the poor whites are, Chesnutt does not hold them personally accountable for their acts. As he has French say, "Environment

controls the making of men."³² The Colonel is enlightened and progressive because he has seen the world, has lived in places other than Clarendon. By contrast, the poor whites know only Beaver County, a backwater of civilization. The Negroes, of course, receive not even the paltry benefits the benighted South has to offer.

There is one group of Southerners whom Chesnutt does hold accountable: the gentry. Though his novels contain some admirable aristocrats, his final judgment of the old master class is negative. Implicit in *The Colonel's Dream* is the author's belief that, had the gentry deigned to associate with the lower whites and given them moral guidance, many wrongs of the postwar South—ignorance, prejudice, the worship of Mammon—might have been corrected. But the class schooled in leadership failed to lead. Henry French says as he prepares to leave Clarendon, "The best people," whenever

any devilry is on foot . . . are never there to prevent it—they vanish into thin air at its approach. When it is done, they excuse it; and they make no effort to punish it. . . . [What] they permit they justify, and they cannot shirk the responsibility.³³

Against the stonewall of society, the efforts of one man are for naught. The Colonel's dream "of a regenerated South, filled with thriving industries, and thronged with a prosperous and happy people" will remain unfulfilled for many years to come.³⁴ In this novel Chesnutt offers no solution to the South's problems. Elsewhere he suggests that only sweeping reform under the aegis of federal authority will make the South a better place.³⁵ This, he admits, will not come soon.

But for all her faults—and Chesnutt spent most of his literary life writing of them—the South had a special hold on him. His fiction fondly describes the natural South: the great pine forests, the loveliness of spring, the hauntingly beautiful sounds of night. Even Colonel French, an active, aggressive businessman, occasionally contrasts the bustle of New York with the leisurely pace of country life in the South where there is "no strident steam whistle from factory or train to assault the ear, no rumble of passing cabs or street cars."³⁶

Like Cable, Chesnutt loved the Southern land. It was the South's people who enraged him. As the boomers raved of the region's inexhaustible resources, the New South's developers ravaged those resources, natural and human. Unlike Colonel French, whose far-sighted plans would have developed the South without exhausting her, the common run of businessmen, devoid of social consciences, sought merely quick profits. Their abuse of nature diminished "their capacity for human emotion," a trait reserved largely for Chesnutt's Negro characters, who live on the land and respect it.³⁷

To Chesnutt the capacity for human emotion, something the black man could contribute to the South, was just as important to the region as economic growth. What disturbed this fugitive Carolinian was that the white South, even the reputedly progressive New South, considered neither Negroes nor men like Henry French as Southerners. Until the South developed enough to treat all her people honorably and fairly, the good society would remain a dream.

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York, 1970), pp. 7, 193, 198.
2. Grady's address, delivered in December, 1886, is reprinted in Raymond B. Nixon, *Henry W. Grady: Spokesman of the New South* (New York, 1943), pp. 340-350.
3. John Donald Wade, "Old Wine in a New Bottle," in Wade, *Selected Essays and Other Writings*, ed. by Donald Davidson (Athens, Georgia, 1966), p. 158; Nixon, *Grady*, pp. 254-255.
4. See Paul Hamilton Hayne, "The Exposition Ode," [*Poems: Complete Edition* (Boston, 1882), pp. 300-304] an occasional poem written for Atlanta's International Cotton Exposition of 1881. In the early twentieth century, Will N. Harben wrote many novels dealing with the New South, among which are *Abner Daniel* (New York, 1902), *The Georgians* (New York, 1904), *Pole Baker* (New York, 1905), *Ann Boyd* (New York, 1906), *Gilbert Neal* (New York, 1908), and *Dixie Hart* (1910; rpt. New York, n. d.). Thomas Dixon's Reconstruction trilogy—*The Leopard's Spots* (1902; rpt. New York, n. d.), *The Clansman* (1905; rpt. Lexington, Kentucky, 1970), and *The Traitor* (New York, 1907)—exaggerated the economic revival of the postbellum South. Page, foremost memorialist of the Old Order, saluted the New South in his novel *Gordon Keith* (1903; rpt. New York, 1905).
5. Mark Twain [Samuel Langhorne Clemens] and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of To-day* (1873; rpt. Seattle, 1968); George W. Cable, *John March, Southerner* (1894; rpt. New York, 1899).
6. Charles W. Chesnutt to H. D. Robins, 27 September 1900, in Helen M. Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, 1952), p. 152; Julian D. Mason, Jr., "Charles W. Chesnutt as Southern Author," *Mississippi Quarterly*, XX (Spring 1967), 89.
7. H. M. Chesnutt, *Chesnutt*, pp. 5-6, 8-9, 15-16.
8. Quoted in Sylvia Lyons Render, "Eagle with Clipped Wings: Form and Feeling in the Fiction of Charles Waddell Chesnutt" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1962), p. 15n.
9. Quoted in H. M. Chesnutt, *Chesnutt*, pp. 13, 21.
10. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.
11. See Chesnutt, "Tobe's Tribulations," *Southern Workman*, XXIX (November 1900), 658, and "Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem," in *Breaking into Print*, ed. by Elmer Adler (New York, 1937), p. 51.
12. See the following stories by Chesnutt: "Po' Sandy," in Chesnutt, *The Conjure Woman*, new introduction by Robert M. Farnsworth (1899; rpt. Ann Arbor, 1969), pp. 36-63; "Mars Jeems's Nightmare," in *ibid.*, pp. 64-102; "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt," in *ibid.*, pp. 162-194; "Dave's Neckliss," in *Southern Writing, 1585-1920*, ed. by Richard Beale Davis, C. Hugh Holman, and Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (New York, 1970), pp. 879-888; "A Victim of Heredity; or, Why the Darkey Loves Chicken," *Self-Culture Magazine*, XI (July 1900), 404-409. I should like to thank Mr. William Leake

Andrews for sharing with me his bibliography of Chesnutt's stories and for permitting me to reproduce copies of obscure stories in his possession.

13. Chesnutt, "Dave's Neckliss," p. 880.
14. Chesnutt, "Aunt Mimy's Son," *Youth's Companion*, 1 March 1900, 104-105.
15. Chesnutt, "A Roman Antique," *Puck*, 17 July 1889, 351.
16. Chesnutt, "Sis Becky's Pickaninny," in *The Conjure Woman*, p. 159. These words are spoken by Miss Annie, the white narrator's wife and a woman of great sensitivity, whom Chesnutt uses to comment upon the South's racial arrangement.
17. Chesnutt, "Uncle Peter's House," *Cleveland News and Herald*, December 1885.
18. Chesnutt, "The Web of Circumstance," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*, introduction by Earl Schenck Miers (1899; rpt. Ann Arbor, 1968), pp. 291-323.
19. See Chesnutt, "The March of Progress," *Century Magazine*, LXI (January 1901), 422-428. Chesnutt objected to the doctrine of race solidarity, preferring instead that the Negro be assimilated into American society. For this to occur Chesnutt believed that, contrary to the ideas of Booker T. Washington which placed first emphasis on Negro economic improvement, white men must live up to democratic ideals. See August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915: Racial Ideologies in the Age of Booker T. Washington* (1963; rpt. Ann Arbor, 1968), p. 243.
20. Chesnutt, "The Disfranchisement of the Negro," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of To-day* (1903; rpt. Miami, Florida, 1969), p. 102; Render, "Eagle with Clipped Wings," pp. 348-349.
21. Chesnutt, "The Bouquet," in Chesnutt, *Wife of His Youth*, p. 270.
22. Chesnutt, *The Colonel's Dream* (1905; rpt. New York, 1970). Between Chesnutt's two volumes of stories and *The Colonel's Dream*, he published two novels, *The House Behind the Cedars*, a story of interracial love, and *The Marrow of Tradition*, a fictional rendering of the Wilmington, North Carolina, race riot of 1898.
23. Chesnutt, *The Colonel's Dream*, p. 197.
24. Two such men are Archibald Straight in *The House Behind the Cedars* and John Delamere in *The Marrow of Tradition*.
25. The lazy South is a peripheral theme in much of Chesnutt's work. See also "Mars Jeems's Nightmare," p. 68; "Uncle Peter's House," *passim*; "The Sheriff's Children," in Chesnutt, *Wife of His Youth*, p. 62; "McDugald's Mule," *Family Fiction*, 15 January 1887.
26. Chesnutt, *The Colonel's Dream*, p. 16.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 109.
28. In this regard Chesnutt is countering the leisurely ideal of the South as a land where materialism has no place and where ease is a way of life. The implication is that indolence and leisure are not the same. See David Bertelson, *The Lazy South* (New York, 1967), esp. pp. 237-246.
29. William Leake Andrews in "The Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1973), pp. 219-250, *passim*, argues that Feters is too evil to be credible. It may be, however, that Chesnutt was unconcerned with Feters as a character. The reader seldom encounters him directly. He is a rather a dark presence that, Snopes-like, symbolizes the ills of the New South.
30. W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (1941; rpt. New York, n. d.), p. 137.
31. Chesnutt, *The Colonel's Dream*, p. 265.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

- 33. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
 - 34. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
 - 35. See Chesnutt, "The Disfranchisement of the Negro," *passim*.
 - 36. Chesnutt, *The Colonel's Dream*, p. 46.
 - 37. David D. Britt, "Chesnutt's Conjure Tales: What You See Is What You Get," *College Language Association Journal*, XV (March 1972), 277.
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HOMAGE TO CONSTANCE CARY HARRISON

By Dorothy M. Scura

In these times, when everybody seems to be furbishing up his ancestors and setting them on end, as it were, in company with all the old teakettles, queue-ties, rusty muskets, snuff-boxes, and paduasos, it has occurred to me to open the strong box of antiquity, and abstract from there a charming little figure, who, like the Bride of the Mistletoe Bough, has lain moldering many a long year.

"A Little Centennial Lady," *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, July 1876, p. 301

This opening paragraph of Constance Cary Harrison's first signed contribution to a national magazine, published in July of 1876, introduces Sally Fairfax, the only daughter of George Washington's good friend and neighbor, Bryan Fairfax, eighth lord of Fairfax and rector of Christ Church in Alexandria, Virginia. Sally was also the younger sister of Constance Cary Harrison's grandfather, Thomas, ninth lord of Fairfax. Sally died young, but she left a diary, a letter, and family legends, all of which Mrs. Harrison drew upon to tell the story which culminates in Sally's last ball, when she wore a white dress and a pink rose in her hair and General Washington devoted "himself to her especially."¹

Mrs. Harrison's article effectively uses historical record (diary, letter) as well as the author's creative imaginings (Sally's conversation) in a way that is representative of much of Mrs. Harrison's work from her apprentice newspaper pieces, to her early periodical publications on historical figures, to her many novels and short stories. Mrs. Harrison herself would never have been described as "a charming little figure"; in her youth she was beautiful and clever and in her old age she was handsome and formidable, but like her ancestor Sally Fairfax, Mrs. Harrison's literary reputation has "lain moldering many a long year."

This bicentennial year is an especially appropriate time to dust off her works and take a look at them as well as a brief look at their author. Her life was so intimately connected with so much of our history that one of her obituaries claimed, "The eyes that Mrs. Constance Cary Harrison closed yesterday morning had seen more of American history than had those of any living woman."² Not only did she experience a lot of stirring history, but she made use of her experiences in both her fiction and her non-fiction. For this appraisal I will first consider briefly her work and her life. Then, I will discuss three of her works: *Flower de Hundred*, a plantation novel set during the Civil War; *The Anglomaniacs*, a comedy

of manners set during the Centennial; and *Recollections Grave and Gay*, her autobiography.³

Her writing career began before she was twenty, in 1863, and ended in 1911. During the Civil War, when she was living in Richmond in exile from her home near Alexandria, she contributed regularly to two weekly newspapers published in Richmond: *The Magnolia: A Southern Home Journal* and *The Southern Illustrated News*. These selections were published under the name of Refugitta, and most of them were romantic stories set in the Confederacy. The most interesting of these early publications, a series of letters published in the *Southern Illustrated News* between August and November of 1863, was called "A Blockade Correspondence," and was composed of letters which give a lively account of activities in those cities during that time. A novel written during this period, *Skirmishing*, was burned at West and Johnson Publishers in the great fire after the fall of the Confederacy. The number and variety of her apprentice pieces indicates an early and serious approach to writing, and the subject matter recorded in them would continue to serve Constance Cary for the rest of her writing career.

"A Little Centennial Lady" in 1876 is an early example of the historical articles she would write for periodicals—articles which drew on her own family background as well as historical research, often in family documents. She completed pieces on My Lord Fairfax, George Washington, and William Byrd.³ These were each well-written, respectably researched, and properly documented works, which have added interest because of the author's personal connections with each of her subjects.

The books began appearing in 1879, over thirty of them in all, representing a great variety: two books of children's stories, *The Old Fashioned Fairy Book* and *Bric-a-Brac Stories*; several collections of short stories, such as *A Daughter of the South*, and *Shorter Stories*, *A Virginia Cousin*, & *Bar Harbor Tales*, and *The Merry Maid of Arcady*, *His Lordship*, and *Other Stories*; a book on embroidery, painting, and decoration called *Woman's Handiwork in Modern Homes*; a conduct book for young women, *The Well-Bred Girl in Society*; original plays and translations of French plays; and novels. Then she drew directly upon her own experience for the last book she wrote, and it is properly the one for which she is remembered now, for it is her very best. *Recollections Grave and Gay* was published in 1911 when she was sixty-eight years old.

Her autobiography tells neither the date nor place of her birth, but it tells that her father was a Cary, her mother, a Fairfax, and that she

herself eventually married a Harrison, so she was connected to many of the most distinguished men in America. She was born in 1843, and although all biographical sources agree that her birth took place at Vacluse, the Fairfax family estate just outside Alexandria, Virginia, it is much more likely that she was born in Lexington, Kentucky, where her father, Archibald Cary, had gone at age 28 to study law at Transylvania University.⁵

Her father wrote his brother in 1843 and announced the birth of a child: "Our little Constance was born on the 25th of April, the same day and hour with the young Princess of England, Victoria's last, which I hope may be a happy omen." He added that "she promises to have hair of that celestial colour which has been said to be 'love's own hue.'"⁶ Constance's red hair was a trait she shared with her grandfather, Wilson Jefferson Cary, nephew of Thomas Jefferson, who married Mr. Jefferson's ward, Virginia Randolph, in the ballroom at Monticello with Mr. Jefferson himself giving the bride away. A painting at the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond reveals a matronly Constance Cary Harrison, who bears an unmistakable resemblance to Thomas Jefferson, but she did not inherit only red hair from these grandparents, for Virginia Randolph Cary was a writer who published severe conduct books for young women.⁷

So this daughter of old Virginia, who was born in frontier Kentucky, moved as a small child to Cumberland, Maryland, where her father practiced law and edited a newspaper. Upon his death in 1854, her mother returned with Constance and her two brothers to Vacluse. There the family happily remained until the Civil War, when Constance moved to Richmond with her mother. During the next exciting years, the intelligent and beautiful Constance Cary experienced the romance as well as the rigors and deprivations of that War.

After the War was over, she spent a year in Europe with her mother studying French and music, and then returned to the United States to marry Burton Harrison, the dashing and brilliant private secretary to Jefferson Davis during the War. (Harrison had spent nine months in prison after having been captured with Jefferson Davis on his flight from Richmond.) The Harrisons settled in New York City where he became a respected and successful attorney and she became a respected and prolific writer. After Harrison's death in 1904, his widow moved to Washington, D. C., where she remained until her death in 1920.

Mrs. Harrison, born when John Tyler was in the White House, would live to see eighteen presidents and would die during Woodrow Wilson's last year in office. During her lifetime she witnessed many historical

events and she met many important men. In Lexington, her father had taken his small daughter to see Henry Clay, and as a young woman she attended a White House levee following Lincoln's inauguration and shook the President's hand. The next time she saw Lincoln was when he drove down Grace Street in conquered Richmond with his son Tad on his knee. In the years between her first and second glimpses of Lincoln, Constance Cary would know well those Confederate leaders in Richmond.

She would watch Jefferson Davis's inauguration as president of the Confederacy from a window in the State Library. She would receive a kiss in the moonlight from General Lee, "the idol of the Confederacy," as that noble man departed after visiting her mother. She would be admitted to the Capitol late at night to see the great chieftain, Stonewall Jackson, lying in state. And she would see General Hood, that indomitable soldier who lost a leg at Chickamauga, blush when Miss Mary Preston read a eulogy to him at an entertainment.

She would also see her cousin, the titian-haired Hetty Cary, reputedly the most beautiful young woman in the South, stand at the altar rail at St. Paul's Church and marry General John Pegram; three weeks later Constance would see the devastated Hetty kneel in the same church at the coffin of her husband killed in The Battle of Petersburg. Constance herself would fall in love and eventually marry a Confederate hero.⁸

The close association with men in public life would continue into Constance Cary's old age. For example, her husband was offered the first ambassadorship into Italy by President Grover Cleveland in 1893, and her son, Francis Burton Harrison, was first a U. S. Congressman from New York's sixteenth district, and later, the Governor-General of the Phillipines.

The obituary which claimed she had seen more history than any living woman did not exaggerate.

Two artifacts in Richmond connect Constance Cary Harrison to history more powerfully than words. In the Maryland Room at the Museum of the Confederacy hangs a Confederate flag between glass. A silk square 31 inches by 32 inches, it is composed of a blue St. Andrew's cross bordered in white on a field of red. On each arm of the cross are painted three gold stars, and faded metallic fringe surrounds the flag. Embroidered in one corner in gold thread is the word "Constance"—the Cary is missing and a patch covers that part of the flag.

One of the first three Confederate flags made early in the War, it traveled from Richmond with General Earl Van Dorn to Mississippi and

served as his flag during the War where it "was torn with bullets and stained with the smoke of Pea Ridge, Corinth, Iuka, Holly Springs, and other battle fields" (*Recollections*, 65). (The other two flags, made by Hetty and Jennie Cary, were given to Generals Joseph E. Johnston and P. G. T. Beauregard.) The Van Dorn flag, faded by time, damaged by battle, but carefully preserved over a century later, is a splendid symbol of Constance Cary Harrison's greatest subject matter, the South, specifically the Civil War as demonstrated in her memoirs, but also in the novel *Flower de Hundred*.

The second artifact is wrapped in tissue paper and carefully preserved at the Richmond Historical Society. As shiny as if it were newly-minted, it is a gold medal bearing a likeness of the Statue of Liberty sent to Mrs. Burton Harrison by the sculptor Bartholdi for her major part in raising the money to construct the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty, France's centennial gift to America (*Recollections*, 313-15). That symbol exemplifies her second great subject matter, America. In her periodical articles the American subject matter emerges as history, but she also treats America in fiction, as in the novel *The Anglomaniacs*, set during the centennial in New York City.

Flower de Hundred: The Story of a Virginia Plantation belongs to the same genre as John Pendleton Kennedy's *Swallow Barn* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With The Wind*. Its content is a startling mixture of the romantic and the realistic. In the beginning the idyllic beauty of life on the old plantation is romantically celebrated, but when the War comes, life is then realistically documented.

The house itself stands on the James River:

With spreading wings and airy colonnades it is a type of the stately by-gones of Virginia's ancient aristocracy now crumbling to sure decay. Surrounding its lawns and rose gardens are marshes full of game, wheat fields and tobacco fields still ready to answer to a fructifying touch, tall forests of unbroken shade. Wars, more than one, and Indian massacres and forays, have swept over it to leave no enduring trace. (1)

All this pastoral fecundity that has thus far resisted wars provides the setting for the early part of the book, which could serve as a conduct book on how to behave on a plantation. One would, of course, go on fox hunts, attend splendid Christmas celebrations, and, most important of all, dance at that last, grand ball before the War.

When that War comes, it appears to be one which will leave an enduring trace. The setting changes as characters leave the old plantation for the battlefield or for besieged Richmond. Eden gives way finally to hell. The old Colonel, Richard Throckmorton, half-dressed and shivering

in the cold, with "his gray locks streaming" watches "the sack of his ancient homestead."

Under suspicion as a depot of Confederate supplies, the outbuildings were recklessly put to the torch, and a ring of smoke and flame from burning stables, barns, school-house, bowling-alley, kitchens, and dairy, the whole, in fact, of the little village tributary to a great Virginia dwelling, encircled and swept perilously near the mansion. Soldiers mad with excitement overran the rooms and, dragging whatever they could lay hands on out upon the lawn, made merry with their spoil. Furniture, pictures, mirrors, carpets, books, saddles, fireirons strewed the grass. . . .

And so the day wore on till evening closed the saturnalia, while Colonel Throckmorton, maimed, despoiled, and helpless, saw with a heart swelling with gratitude that the surrounding fire had burnt out, leaving the empty shell of his dwelling still standing. (244-45)

Finally the war ends. Those left alive in the family are living in a smaller and older building on the land. The Colonel has lost his arm and has lost his heir as well: Dick Throckmorton has died on the battlefield leaving a wife and baby. There is only poverty and pain and loss and Reconstruction to face.

But suddenly the realism gives way to wish-fulfillment. The *real* heir has survived, and he marries a cousin who secretly purchases Flower de Hundred in order to restore it for the family. Many of the servants come back and "Flower de Hundred looks today, very much as it did before the war" (301). So if the South did not exactly win the war, in this version she did not lose it, either.

The old house itself seems to dominate this novel where place triumphs over character. The war is more real than the people who suffer it. Mrs. Harrison's gift is with event and with place rather than with people. Her main characters seem to have escaped from one of those fairy tales she wrote for children.

The master of Flower de Hundred, Colonel Richard Throckmorton, possesses a genealogy that sounds like Constance Cary's. His colonial forebear, Guy Throckmorton, was a cavalier "who died exalting King Charles," while Guy's wife came of a "noble Scottish family" (2, 5). The Colonel's mother, just sixteen years his senior, lives on the plantation, too. She is the ornamental gardener of the place and is responsible for all the flowers—locusts, horse-chestnuts, paulonias, fringe, crape myrtles, pomegranates, lilacs, dogwood, snowball, just to name a few. And then there are four children on the place, all cousins, all orphans.

The two boys both are named Miles Richard, though one is called Miles and the other Dick. In true fairy-tale fashion both were found by the Colonel in a small boat in the Caribbean. The grandson and heir to the Colonel was identified by a locket. It is not surprising to find just midway in the book that the presumed heir, Miles, who is blonde and nice, is

not the Colonel's grandson, because the true heir is really Richard, brunette and petulant. Just four years later Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* would show the profound implications of switching two babies' identities, but Mrs. Harrison uses it only for a little suspense.

Two orphan girls complete the family. Amabel is the beautiful one, while Ursula is the bookish one. Both boys fall in love with Bell, who is described as the "perfection of blond prettiness." In contrast, Ursula is a tomboy, who cares nothing for the feminine graces and accomplishments but enjoys reading Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton! Bell marries the presumed heir but in the end is left a widow, while Ursula inherits money, buys Flower de Hundred and marries the true heir, Miles.

This device of putting two protagonists, one "sensible, downright, self-effacing," who is "temporarily outshone by a pretty, shallow sister or cousin," is a pattern which Ernest Earnest identifies as going back to Jane Austen and appearing as late as *The Rise of Silas Lapham*.⁹ This may explain Mrs. Harrison's portrayal of Bell and Ursula, though the pattern does not seem confined between Austen and Howells; it is as old as Cinderella, for example, and as young as Ellen Glasgow's *In This Our Life*. And we can look not only to literary convention and archetypal pattern, but to biography for an explanation. When Hetty and Constance Cary called on Mary Chesnut in Richmond, Mrs. Chesnut recorded in her diary on January 8, 1864: "Snow of the deepest! I thought nobody would come, but they did. First Constance Cary trips in, the clever Conny. Hetty is the beauty, so-called, though she is clever enough too. Constance has a classically perfect profile." And on March 3, Mrs. Chesnut noted another visit from the Cary cousins: "Hetty the Handsome and Constance the witty came."¹⁰ Though both cousins seem pretty enough, it is Hetty, according to Mrs. Chesnut, whose hands are held by General Lee, who fascinates Mr. Chesnut so much that he will not leave a ball, and who marries a General. In the end, of course, when Hetty is a grieving widow, Constance marries the brilliant hero, Burton Harrison.

Not only do the setting and the characters in *Flower de Hundred* seem to reflect biographical counterparts, but the author's mixed attitude toward slavery is the same one set forth two decades later in her autobiography. In the novel, she portrays the happy, devoted slave and pictures the quarters with "bright-eyed pickaninnies" rolling underfoot and "patient patriarchs" sunning themselves in doorways. At the same time, the blacks are a threat, "ready at a hint to relapse into the barbarous habits and beliefs of their African ancestors" (43). They are sensual, dishonest, cunning. But though she defends slavery by arguing that

these happy peasants are better off than the whites in the London slums or the Orientals suffering under European heels, she calls the institution "wretched." She blames slavery for hampering the development of the South and argues for equality:

And a crying shame it was that so rich and generous a portion of the American continent would be thus withheld from the progress with which the modern world was advancing to general enlightenment. The highest civilization is reached only where there is absolute equality before the law of rights of every kind, and possibility of equal actual attainment. (44)

The Colonel is more than reluctant to take up arms against the flag of the U. S. He sees slavery as the white man's burden and tells his friend Willis: "We, at a tremendous cost, have kept our negroes from lapsing into barbarism, and they are a heavy weight to carry. But I'd have been glad to have been born free of the responsibility of slaves. I wish my great-grandchildren [Miles and Dick] could live free of it." This, says his friend, is "queer talk for a slaveholder at a time like this" (186). Throckmorton fights for Virginia, of course, because like his forebear who was the "last of the Burgesses to hold out for King George," he is "a True Virginian" (187).

Mrs. Harrison's gift for satire is demonstrated sparingly in *Flower de Hundred*, where the pervading tone is elegaic. But in *The Anglomaniacs* she writes a full-fledged satire, a novel of manners in the tradition of Cooper's *Home as Found* and *Homeward Bound*. It was published anonymously in *Scribner's* and then came out in book form, causing a stir as people tried to guess precisely who both the author and the characters might be.

Mrs. Floyd-Curtis, newly rich and newly-hyphenated, is out to catch a titled European for her beautiful daughter Lily. To help in this project is Barbara Clay, herself a victim of a tragic America-Europe marriage which has left her alone and penniless in a sixth-floor walk-up in New York City. Mrs. Clay is a combination public relations representative and Madame Merle: she introduces Mother and Daughter Floyd-Curtis to the right people and helps with clothing choices and manipulates Lily into a relationship with a British lord who in Madame Merle-Gilbert Osmond fashion just happens to be a former lover of Barbara Clay.

Lily is independent enough to fall in love with Mr. Jencks, a biologist out of the British middle class on his way from Oxbridge to the State University in Illyria, Michigan. Lily forthrightly admits that she has "the most plebian taste for workers," but she is not independent enough to manage to marry Mr. Jencks, and Jencks, who is clever enough to grasp the motives of the manipulating Barbara Clay, is too much of a dreamer and not worldly enough to capture the captivating Lily.

In the beginning of the novel, the characters are all on a ship coming home from England. Mrs. Floyd-Curtis sets out to ingratiate herself with Lady Melrose, who is the mother of the present unmarried owner of the title. She plies the British lady, suffering sea-sickness, with "daily offerings of homage—pâté sandwiches, fruit, champagne, and what not. . . . and thus, by a process slow, but sure as the growth of pearls within the shell, America appeased the mother country" (94).

Lord Melrose takes the bait of a promised dowry of four million dollars and courts Lily. After a year of soul-searching, Lily accepts him, even though her love belongs to Jencks. Mrs. Clay sends Lily old love letters to show Lily why Melrose is marrying her, and Lily in true sentimental-heroine style is disturbed by the revelation. She breaks off the engagement, and makes a feeble attempt to summon Jencks by mailing him a book of poetry as a signal to come to her. The package is intercepted by Mom and Lily marries Melrose. It is a bitter ending to what seemed to be a sweet tale. Whether Lily will sit in front of her fire someday and come to terms with Melrose as Isabel Archer finally did with Osmond or whether she will become an abandoned and compromised Ellen Olenski (or Barbara Clay), we do not know. What we do know is that lovely Lily has been sacrificed to one of the "titled sharks" by her superficial and materialistic mother.

That this is a book about America is clear. In the background the Centennial is being celebrated. Just as Lily accepts Melrose and plans are going forward for her wedding, her excitement is "enhanced by the confusion of a great city in a delirium of Centennial fervor and that of a society rent by internecine warfare on the subject of precedence at the Centennial ball" (279-80). And Lily flees briefly from her mother to make a pilgrimage down Broadway to spend a day with her father, Eliphalet, who has withdrawn from his wife's social climbing to live quietly and run his business. Lily asks her father to take her over the Brooklyn Bridge to see the Bartholdi statue and climb every step to the torch. After a lunch of pork and beans, father and daughter take a boat "to the shrine of Liberty . . . where the brazen goddess holds her court" (241). On the way Lily explains to her father that she is "the best sort of an American." She likes New York, because it is a place where one sees "all the nations pushing forward neck and neck, so confident, so eager." Her father responds that all of this "sounds like a Fourth o' July oration" (240).

Flower de Hundred and *The Anglomaniacs* are minor contributions to the American novel. *Flower* is an interesting example of the plantation novel, while *Anglomaniacs* is a light comedy of manners. Perhaps neither

novel deserves to be buried; *Flower* is as valuable as *Swallow Barn* and if Lily Floyd-Curtis is not precisely a sister of Daisy Miller and Isabel Archer and Ellen Olenski, she is at least a distant cousin.

Neither work is as valuable, of course, as the autobiographical *Recollections Grave and Gay*.¹¹ Constance Cary Harrison explains her method early in the book: she will make no attempt to record events chronologically but will rather write things down which "may interest readers as a page torn from old-time chronicles of American social life before the war" (41). The most interesting contribution she makes is to provide, as a sensitive and intelligent woman, an accurate and detailed view of the Civil War. Her record may lack the immediacy and the uncensored candor of Mary Chesnut's *Diary*, but it compensates by offering a coherent view arrived at after years of reflection and experience. It is unjust to call it "nostalgically gilded," as one critic has,¹² since Mrs. Harrison does draw from records—letters, a diary, and other documents—in writing her memoirs. The effect is of a meditation on a personal history, but a meditation shored by records as well as memory.

Especially interesting are her views on slavery. She describes her hatred of that institution: "In some mysterious way I had drunk in with my mother's milk—who inherited it from her stern Swedenborgian father—a detestation of the curse of slavery upon our beautiful Southern land" (42). After all, her grandfather had been the first gentleman in the state of Virginia to manumit his slaves, having each of them taught a trade or sent at the former master's expense to Liberia.

And though Constance Cary enthusiastically served as a nurse during the War and endured all manner of hardships, she early decided that war was not an answer for any problem. After accompanying her aunt on a mission looking for her wounded son and seeing the suffering soldiers, "bandaged faces stiff with blood and thick with flies," she was left with an "ineffaceable" impression: "It left me permanently convinced that nothing is worth war [83]!"

Her memoirs record the realistic details of a young woman's life in Richmond during the war. They also provide a profound portrayal of an intelligent woman of that time, something her novels did not achieve. And her life was more romantic and more interesting than any of her fictional characters' lives. The girls' romances in *Flower de Hundred*, for example, cannot compare with the Cary girls' romances movingly described with great restraint in *Recollections*.

Her writing is not at the center of the memoirs; rather, her life is. Perhaps she is one author whose life was more of a work of art than her

writing was. She modestly understates her professional vocation when she tells late in her book of taking "up the professional ink-splashing which has filled so large a portion of my life." She explains further that she wrote "for my pleasure and to meet engagements made with editors." She suggests that her promptness in meeting her "literary engagements indicates the absence of the ear-marks of genius from an author" (302-03). But she claims the writing has brought her happiness. Her son mentions his mother's writing only casually in his autobiography, explaining that her "literary gifts were a great help to the family exchequer."¹³

For whatever reasons she took pen in hand, she was the seventh generation in her family to do so. For her elegance, her intelligence, her good taste, for her one solid literary contribution, and for the happy accident that made her a person to whom things happened—it seems fitting to pay homage to Constance Cary Harrison this bicentennial year.

FOOTNOTES

1. It was this Sally's aunt, Sally Cary (later Mrs. George William Fairfax), who was the object of George Washington's youthful and passionate love. The story is told in "A Little Centennial Lady."
2. *Richmond News-Leader*, 23 November 1920.
3. Page references to the following editions of these three books will be cited in the text: *Flower de Hundred: The Story of a Virginia Plantation* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890); *The Anglomaniacs* (New York: Cassell Publishing Company, 1890); *Recollections Grave and Gay* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

In addition to *Flower de Hundred*, Mrs. Harrison wrote a number of books set in the South, notably *A Son of the Old Dominion* and *The Carlyles* (1905). See Edna Hartness, *Plantation Life in Virginia as Recorded in Mrs. Burton Harrison's Fiction*, M. A. Thesis Duke 1939.

Mrs. Harrison signed her magazine pieces Constance Cary Harrison, but her books were published under Mrs. Burton Harrison.

4. "My Lord Fairfax of Virginia," *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, 18 (September 1879), 715-28; "The Home and the Haunts of Washington," *Century Magazine*, 35 (November 1887), 3-22; "Washington at Mount Vernon After the Revolution," *Century Magazine*, 37 (April 1889), 834-50; "Washington in New York in 1789," *Century Magazine*, 37 (April 1889), 850-59; "Colonel William Byrd of Westover, Virginia," *Century Magazine*, 42 (June 1891), 163-78.
5. Although all of the standard references state that Constance Cary was born in Fairfax County, Virginia, I am proposing that she was born in Kentucky on the basis of two pieces of evidence. The typed manuscript of Francis Burton Harrison's autobiography, *About it and About*, in Alderman Library, University of Virginia, states on page 30 that Mr. Harrison's mother was born in Lexington, Kentucky. Since Mr. Harrison was a U. S. Congressman, Governor-General of the Philippines, and a meticulous scholar, I am inclined to accept his assignment of birthplace for his mother. (However, he does give the birthdate as 1846, which is incorrect.)

Also in Alderman Library is a typescript copy of a letter written by Archibald Cary, Constance's father, to his brother Wilson Miles Cary. Dated 10 June 1843, and written from Lexington, Kentucky, this letter announces Constance's birth. Francis

Burton Harrison quotes a portion of this letter in *Archibald Cary of Carysbrook, Virginia* (Jarman's Inc.: Charlottesville, 1942), p. 35.

A letter of 17 July 1976 to me from Mrs. Charles Baird, Jr., Constance Cary's granddaughter, argues at some length that Constance Cary was born in Virginia. Mrs. Baird even remembers her grandmother's showing her a picture of Vaucluse and saying she was born there.

6. Letter cited in n 5.

7. Francis Burton Harrison writes about his great-grandmother in a moving memoir of his great-grandfather, *Archibald Cary of Carysbrook, Virginia*:

Instruction as to how the young should behave was rather a hobby of Mrs. Virginia Cary. The urge was so strong in her that she broke the taboo of that day against a search for publicity by ladies, and published several books. Of these, it will suffice to name but two: one was called "*The Christian Parents' Assistant*", and the other, issued in 1828, was entitled "*Letters on Female Character, Addressed to a Young Lady on the Death of Her Mother.*"

Mr. Harrison goes on to explain that various members of the family had difficulty trying to read these books and one daughter-in-law of Mrs. Cary's "used to tell with relish in later years how she had once treated the virtuous and didactic *Letters* as Becky Sharp had treated Johnson's 'Dixionary' on a celebrated occasion" pp. 41-42.

8. The biographical material in this paragraph and in the two preceding paragraphs is recounted in great detail in *Recollections Grave and Gay*.
9. Ernest Earnest, *The American Eve in Fact and Fiction, 1775-1914* (Urbana, Chicago, London: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1974), p. 3.
10. Mary Boykin Chesnut, *Diary from Dixie*, Ed. Ben Ames Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), pp. 349, 387.
11. Earlier books such as Mary T. Tardy's *The Living Female Writers of the South* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Hoefflinger, 1872) and E. F. Harkins' *Famous Authors (Women)* (Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1901) gave generous treatments of Constance Cary Harrison and her work.

More recent scholars remember her mainly for *Recollections*. In Edmund Wilson's chapter title "Three Confederate Ladies" in *Patriotic Gore* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), he discusses at length Kate Stone, Sarah Morgan, and Mary Chesnut, but he does refer to Harrison's *Recollections*. Ann Firor Scott in *The Southern Lady* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970) cites *Recollections* in pointing out Constance Cary's aversion to slavery. Earnest's chapter on Southern women during the Civil War in *The American Eve* includes a discussion of Constance Cary, along with Kate Stone and Mary Chesnut. Earnest draws at some length from *Recollections*. Daniel Aaron in *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) seems to have completely ignored Constance Cary Harrison.

12. Earnest, p. 158.
 13. About it and About, p. 40. Cited in n 5.
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THE ROLE OF HONOR IN SOUTHERN SOCIETY

By Clement Eaton

Historians and sociologists, endlessly seeking to comprehend the enigma of the Old South, have offered various theses as the central theme of its society. One thesis they overlooked is the peculiar dedication of the Southern people to honor. Honor is an elusive and difficult subject, partly because the term has so many meanings and connotations. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* lists as some of these definitions: a code principally of male dignity, integrity, and pride maintained in some societies, as in feudal Europe, by force of arms; esteem, respect, reverence; nobility of mind, probity, integrity; a woman's chastity, a reputation for chastity; glory, fame, distinction; and personal integrity maintained without legal or other obligation. Southern honor came to mean in the pre-Civil War era primarily a high self-respect that would not tolerate insults and often led to formal duels, an exaltation of virility and bravery, chivalry toward women, and a readiness to volunteer for the defense of one's "country," the South, and magnanimously to fight as a soldier. One term frequently used in the antebellum South, the "high-toned" gentleman, perhaps sums up all of these prescriptions.

Side by side with the growth of the Cotton Kingdom, there arose in the South between 1820 and 1861 a luxuriant romanticism of mind that formed the principal basis of Southern honor. This romanticism came largely from medieval European origins, evangelical Christianity, and the special economic influences of the large plantation and of the master-slave relationship. Whether the long-lingering frontier, the romantic scenery, and the ennui of lonely plantation life also contributed to the growth of Southern romanticism would be difficult to determine. It is more certain that Southern romanticism was encouraged by the romantic novels and poems that were so popular in this region before the Civil War—Sir Walter Scott's novels and verse, *Scottish Chiefs*, Froissart's chronicles, the poetry of Byron and Moore, Plutarch's *Lives*, and even Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Northerners read this romantic literature, too, but the seeds of romanticism fell on more fertile soil below the Mason and Dixon line, partly because Southerners saw a resemblance between those far-off times of serfs and manors, lords and ladies, and knights-errant, and their own society of slaves, large plantations, and cavalier masters. So pervasive was this romanticism in the South that even the

fugitive slave, Frederick Douglass, who did not know the name of his white father, adopted as his surname the name of Scott's hero in "The Lady of the Lake."¹

Rural and traditional societies such as existed in the Old South, we now recognize, are powerfully influenced by myths. The Southern region adopted the myth of the Cavalier origin of its society as contrasted with the plebeian origin of New England. This illusion may seem ironic in view of the actuality of most Southerners then being plain farmers, living in log cabins or modest frame houses and laboring under the hot sun for a low standard of living. Today, as a result of modern historical research, particularly that of Professor Thomas Jefferson Wertenbaker, we know the falsity of this myth. But Southerners of the period accepted the Cavalier myth on faith, because they wished to believe it. For example, William Gilmore Simms, the South Carolina novelist, expressed the belief of his section in the aristocratic heritage of the Southerners when, during a dark hour of the Confederacy, he wrote to Senator James H. Hammond that "the blood of the Cavaliers can never succumb [sic]."²

So affected were the Southern upper class, particularly of the southeastern seaboard, by romanticism that they held fake tournaments. Even the harsh realities of the Civil War did not stop the holding of these incredibly romantic spectacles. Mrs. James Chesnut Jr. wrote in her famous diary in May, 1864, of her husband's dashing nephew Johnny, an officer in the Confederate Army: "He rode at a tournament in Columbia and crowned Natalie Heyward queen of love and beauty."³ The Northerners were far too pragmatic to hold fake tournaments or to use the romantic terms of Southerners, who called their soldiers in the Mexican and the Civil Wars, "knights." It would have been an oddity, furthermore, for New Englanders to speak of the honor of New England as Southerners often spoke of the honor of the South. Indeed, the semantics of the South and the North were different. Lincoln and the Northern politicians seldom spoke of honor but, instead, of defending "democracy" and "liberty"; Jefferson Davis and the Southern political leaders, on the other hand, orated just as ardently on "the honor of the South" and on personal honor.

The cult of honor in the South was a relatively late development. In fact, the development of a touchy, and often artificial, sense of honor arose in Southern society mainly after the death of Thomas Jefferson in 1826 and flourished only through the Civil War. Rarely, if ever, did Jefferson or his contemporaries use the word in the sense that Jefferson Davis and his fellow-Southerners did. Jefferson, however, made an important contribution to an older concept of honor in introducing the

honor system in the University of Virginia, whose graduates carried the concept with them wherever they emigrated. The noted scientist, Joseph LeConte, who taught at South Carolina College in the 1850's, observed the operation of this virtue among the sons of planters who attended that institution. In his autobiography he wrote, "I had never previously seen (nor have I since) so high a sense of honor among the students in their relations to one another and to the faculty."⁴ Jefferson almost certainly would have disapproved one manifestation of Southern honor, namely, the fighting of duels. It also is highly questionable whether he would have approved of the growth of regional honor as it arose at the time of secession.

Travelers noticed that, especially in the form of chivalry, honor was more prevalent in the Southern states than above the Mason and Dixon line. Henry Benjamin Whipple (later to become Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota) noted in his travel diary in 1842: "The southerner himself is different from the northerner in many striking particulars. He is more chivalrous, that is to say, he has more of the old English feeling common in the days of the feudal system."⁵ Another Northerner, John William DeForest, some twenty-five years later concurred with Whipple's opinion. An officer in the Union army, and immediately after the war a Freedmen's Bureau agent in South Carolina, he observed that Southerners "exhibited more of the antique virtues than did New Englanders; they care less for wealth, art, learning, and other delicacies; they care more for individual character and honor."⁶ And D. R. Hundley, an Alabama planter, in his pioneer analysis of Southern society, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (1860), noted the overweening pride of the upper class in considering themselves gentlemen with a sense of honor superior to that of their Northern counterparts.⁷

What is remarkable about the Southern practice of honor as a code of conduct was that it was not confined to the upper class, though Professor Beverly Tucker of William and Mary College in a letter to Simms in 1850 implied that it was. He declared that his native state of Virginia "was sunk in the slough of democracy, which has no sense of honor."⁸ Rather, the conception of honor held by the gentry was to some degree, through a process of osmosis, acquired by all classes of Southern society. When William Thomson, a Scottish weaver seeking employment, was traveling through the South in 1840-42, he was impressed with the great sense of self-respect he found among the working class. Unlike members of that class in Great Britain, Southern mechanics considered themselves "men of honour" who resented any indignity that might be shown to them, "even at the expense of their life or that of those who ventured to insult

them." He thought Southerners were quite a distinct race from the Yankees. "They have a high sense of honour; treating every white man as a gentleman but rigidly exacting the same respect in turn. Ladies are treated on all occasions with great deference and respect."⁹

Even some overseers who rose out of their class by acquiring land and slaves, developed "somewhat of a gentlemanly bearing from intercourse with their employers," reported Frederick Law Olmsted, the most observant Northern traveler in the antebellum South. The small planters of the interior cotton districts, according to the same authority, displayed "more dignity of manner or bearing, and they give a stranger an impression of greater respectability than the middle class farmers at the North and in England, while they have less general information and less active and inquiring minds."¹⁰

The experience of Henry Stanley, the future explorer of the "Dark Continent," who emigrated as a youth from Wales to Arkansas, is very revealing as to the contagious influence of the code of honor upon un-aristocratic men in the South. In his autobiography he expressed his amazement at "the proud, sensitive spirit prevailing in Arkansas" at the end of the antebellum period, where "to refute a statement was tantamount to giving the lie direct, and was likely to be followed by an instant appeal to the revolver or bowie."¹¹ The clerks in the store where he worked and the plain farmers who patronized it subscribed to the code of honor, and even the Jewish proprietor succumbed to the powerful force of public opinion, bought a dueling pistol, and quickly resented any suggestion of insult.

Alexander H. Stephens was another prominent example of how a poor boy of the yeoman class, after he rose by his efforts into the gentry, absorbed aristocratic ideas of the obligation of honor. He challenged men to duels and on May 8, 1860 in a letter to a friend gave a remarkable statement of his dedication to honor: "What is to become of parties in the country I do not know; but of my own honor I know what shall come. That is in my own keeping, and if I and the country go down together that shall remain untarnished to the last."¹² Indeed, it frequently occurred that poor boys of the yeoman class, such as Andrew Jackson, rose out of their class to become "one-generation aristocrats" with the courtly manners and the appropriation of the code of honor of the gentleman to the manor born.

Two indispensable elements of personal honor in the Old South, as elsewhere, were truthfulness and honesty, which one must not confuse, as Southerners claimed Yankees did, with legality. Men of honor scorned

taking advantage of bankruptcy laws in order to save a remnant of their fortunes, and they were frequently called upon to exercise this virtue by the prevalent practice of endorsing the notes of friends, relatives, and neighbors (to refuse was regarded as an insult). Thus, numerous Southerners of the antebellum period were ruined financially by the failure of those whose notes they had endorsed so recklessly. Maunsell White, the great commission merchant of New Orleans, was a prominent example of honor in business; he refused to avail himself of the refuge of the bankruptcy laws, after the crash of his business in 1850, but sought to preserve his honor and good name by striving to pay every dollar that he owed to his creditors. He had been the factor to Andrew Jackson in selling the cotton from the latter's plantation, and shortly before the "Old Hero" died in 1845, he wrote a letter to White praising him for his honesty and fair dealing. The great merchant replied that he would treasure Jackson's letter and leave it to his children and grandchildren "to inculcate sentiments of Integrity, Honor, and Patriotism."¹³

Nevertheless, only in a relative sense was the Old South a shining land of honor. It had its cheaters, crooks, and unscrupulous persons. Cotton factors found that they had to keep a sharp lookout for those few dishonest planters who tried to increase the weight of their cotton bales by hiding rocks in them.¹⁴ And in the Civil War there were numerous Southerners, undeterred by a sense of honor, who evaded the draft laws, deserted from the army, or engaged in unscrupulous speculation.

The most dramatic way in which a gentleman defended his honor was to challenge any man that insulted him or his lady to a duel, provided the latter could be classified as a gentleman; otherwise, he horsewhipped him. William Gilmore Simms illustrated this usage of the term in a letter to the Richmond man of letters John R. Thompson, introducing his son Gilmore, a Confederate soldier. The young Carolinian, he wrote, was so sensitive that he would be cut to the quick by an unkind or disapproving word from his father but would instantly repel an insult from a stranger or acquaintance.¹⁵ Thus he upheld Southern notions of honor. The novelist himself demonstrated that he also was a man of his time and region in a curious episode concerning a Northern critic. The latter had impugned his honor, he thought. Accordingly, he wrote to ex-Governor Hammond and to the Greenville editor, Benjamin F. Perry, himself a duelist, for their opinion whether he should challenge the supercilious Northerner to a duel, and at the same time he requested a New York friend to inquire whether the insulter was a gentleman, for otherwise the code duello would not require him to risk his life in a passage at arms. Both Hammond and Perry advised him that since the critic had not given

him "the lie direct" he had no obligation to resort to a challenge and it would be silly for him to do so.¹⁶

The frequency of dueling in the South has been greatly exaggerated; and the history of duels has so often been told that there is no need to discuss it in this essay. The attempts to stop dueling, on the other hand, are far less known. Many prominent men on principle refused to fight duels, and most Southern states passed laws disqualifying a man who fought a duel from holding public office. On May 27, 1844, the Mississippi Anti-Duelling Society was organized; it adopted an elaborate constitution providing for a Court of Honor, to which members pledged themselves to submit for adjudication, difficulties that might lead to a duel. Jefferson Davis attended the meeting and spoke forcibly against the absolute outlawing of duels, which he said "could only be suppressed by the progress of intelligence, morality, and good breeding," and in the Senate of the United States he defended some duels involving honor and personal insults.¹⁷

Only a small percentage of challenges to a duel resulted in bloodshed, either because of the astonishingly poor marksmanship of the participants or because points of honor were often decided by reference to an arbitrator or to a "Court of Honor." Such a court was held by the students of the University of Virginia when Louis T. Wigfall, a native of South Carolina, was a student there. At a dance given by Professor Bonnycastle, Wigfall, who had drunk a large quantity of wine, tried to dance with a young lady but was rebuffed by her escort. Resenting language "that I could suffer from no one," he challenged the "insulter" to a duel, but it was prevented by a "Court of Honor" of students that adjudged that Wigfall had not been insulted.¹⁸ He later emigrated to Texas after killing a man in a duel and became a Senator and prominent secession leader there. In a more prosaic manner a "Court of Honor" was held in Camden, South Carolina, on March 19, 1861, in which ex-Senator James Chesnut, Jr. and several leading citizens stopped a duel from taking place.

How did it happen that the sense both of personal and regional honor became so exaggerated in the South after the death of Jefferson, in contrast with conditions in the North? In addition to the social and economic forces earlier discussed, strong political and external forces were operating upon the Southern psyche, forces that contributed to the flourishing of "Southern honor." Attacked by Northern abolitionists, the Southerners felt the necessity of defending slavery on a moral basis, and thus they idealized their society, portraying the slave masters as paternal, high-minded, and honorable gentlemen. An example of this

idealization of Southern society is to be found in the manuscript diary of Mrs. Gertrude Thomas. She wrote in her diary in December, 1863, of the elegance of manner of Southern gentlemen. They possessed, she thought, in contrast with the stiff and abrupt Northerners, more poise and ease in meeting people and in conversing with them.¹⁹ Indeed, Southerners of the antebellum period came to believe that they excelled the Northern people in all the finer points of civilization—in chivalry, courtesy, regard for women (white), genuine hospitality, the refinement and taste of their aristocracy, and, especially, the high sense of honor of their people.²⁰ But they were sadly disillusioned in the course of the Civil War to discover that their stereotype of the superior bravery and fighting qualities of Southern over Northern soldiers was a myth.

Southern regional honor was not stressed until after the introduction of the Wilmot Proviso in Congress in 1846. This bill, Southerners thought, stigmatized Southern slavery and the equality of Southerners within the Union. Resentment over this imagined insult and the subsequent debate over the status of slavery in the new territories acquired by the Mexican War grew in intensity during the decade of 1850-1860 until it played a prominent part in precipitating the secession movement.

In the secession crisis the Southern press and fervid orators appealed to Southerners to uphold the honor of the South. For example, on January 24, 1860, the *Richmond Examiner*, edited by the fiery John M. Daniel, wrote in support of South Carolina's proposal of a Southern Conference that the Southern states should present an ultimatum to the North and "thus secure the existence of the only Union in which the South can remain with honor."²¹ The *Savannah Republican*, disillusioned with politicians, also declared on February 8, 1860: "To the people we would appeal, and arouse them, if possible, to the defense of their honor, their rights, and their firesides."²² The *Charleston Mercury* of February 28, 1860, referring to the right of the Southern slave-holders to colonize common territory, endorsed the sentiment that "the people of the South should be prepared to assert themselves, as their fathers did, at any hazard, though there be nothing at stake but honor."²³ Editor William W. Holden of the *Raleigh North Carolina Standard*, wrote on July 11, 1860, that North Carolina's honor, "sensitive and untarnished," was in her own keeping and not in the keeping of South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi, and that "while we would surrender no right of our State and while we would preserve her honor untarnished among her sisters, yet disunion is one of the last things to be thought of."²⁴ The *Nashville Union and American* on October 12, 1860, urged that all Southerners unite on one presidential ticket "to save themselves from

degradation and dishonor," and to preserve us from "the dread dilemma of submission to sectional domination."²⁵

After Lincoln's election in November there was a debate among Southern newspapers whether Southern honor required their states to secede at once. The New Orleans *Picayune* of November 4, 1860, declared that the election of a sectional candidate was no cause for secession, but that Southerners, taught to reverence constitutional forms of government, should yield to the voice of the majority; it refuted those who maintained that the honor, manliness, and safety of the South could be maintained only by resistance.²⁶ Likewise, the Augusta, Georgia, *Daily Constitutionalist* of December 1, 1860, urged the standing by the rights of the South, but with prudence, rebuking those who declared that "our State is disgraced and dishonored. We repel with indignation the idea that spot or blemish can rest for a moment upon the proud escutcheon of Georgia."²⁷ Also the Nashville *Patriot* on April 24, 1861 urged Tennessee to resist coercion and fight for the Confederacy against the despotic North. "To do otherwise," it said, "would be to sacrifice her honor and her liberty, and rather than do either she will suffer annihilation."²⁸ Such hyperbole was common in the Southern press and among Southern orators during the heated discussion over secession.

Until Lincoln's call upon the states for troops after the firing on Fort Sumter the people of the Southern border states did not feel that their honor or interests required them to secede. The *Charlottesville* [Va.] *Review*, for example, which had consistently opposed secession until then, maintained that in deciding the question of secession there were two points to consider: "the first is the point of honor, the second is the point of interest." Some people, it observed, derided the idea of going to war for an abstraction, but "this is precisely the point on which we would go to war . . . for the *idea* of State honor, for this abstract principle of not bating her [Virginia's] just claims upon threat of coercion."²⁹ After Lincoln's call for troops to coerce the seceded states, Virginia commissioners arrived in Montgomery on May 9th to negotiate for the admission of the state into the Confederacy. Mrs. Chesnut recorded in her diary: "They say Virginia has no grievance; she comes out on a point of honor. Could she stand by and see her sovereign sister states invaded?"³⁰

The concept of Southern regional honor had its noble side as well as its pernicious influence in bringing on the secession movement. Clement C. Clay, Jr., Senator from Alabama, expressed this side in his farewell speech in the Senate when he departed on January 21, 1861. The secession of his state, he declared, was not spasmodic or the result of impulse but came only after a long series of Northern injustices against the

South, during which the Northern churches had even denied Christian communion to Southerners and had branded slaveholding as moral leprosy, culminating in the Republican platform denouncing slavery and polygamy as twin relics of barbarism. Humiliated by these libels of the South, he said, Southerners would lose their self-respect if they tamely submitted to them. "Have we no pride of honor?," he exclaimed as he announced that he was returning to Alabama to defend her honor.³¹ Jefferson Davis, when he delivered his inaugural address as president of the confederate States of America, proclaimed that the Southern people in founding a new nation were animated by a high resolve "where the sacrifices to be made are not weighed in the balance against honor and right and liberty and equality."³²

The history of the South in the Civil War is replete with incidents illustrating the role of honor in its society. Women shamed young men who were reluctant or tardy in volunteering by sending them chemises and petticoats, as did some women of Arkansas to Henry Stanley. He got the message and quickly volunteered. At the beginning and during the first two years of the war the cult of honor reached its apogee. A phrase from Horace was often quoted by Southern soldiers nourished on Latin and Greek authors in Southern academies and colleges: "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" Lieutenant Charles Colcock Jones, Jr., a graduate of the University of Georgia and Harvard Law School, used this phrase in referring to the spirit of his light artillery company from Savannah, who he said were gentlemen all; he later declared in a letter to his father, "For one I will most cheerfully give my life in defense of our common and beloved home, and in support of the honor, nationality, and principles for which we are contending."³³ His remarkable mother wrote of her two sons in the army: "The courage and honor of my sons is the last thing on earth I could doubt." The most highly admired officers in the gray-clad army, Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, Leonidas Polk, and Jackson (in an ambivalent way), fought as Christian paladins, while Sherman, Grant, Sheridan, and Hunter did not know the meaning of chivalry but waged a ruthless, hard-nosed war of destruction against the civilian population as well as the military forces.

One of the most illuminating manuscripts illustrating Southern notions of chivalry and the call of honor is found in the Brock Collection at the Huntington Library. On the last day of the battle of Gettysburg the Virginian, General Lewis A. Armistead, was in the lead of the troops of Pickett and Pettigrew that made the famous quixotic charge against the Union lines. After the mortal wounding of Armistead, Colonel William R. Aylett took command of his shattered brigade; his report of the battle is a brief epic of Confederate valor:

Conspicuous to all, 50 yards in advance of his brigade, waving his hat upon his sword, he led his men upon the enemy with a steady bearing which inspired all breasts with enthusiasm and courage, and won the admiration of every beholder. For in advance of all, he led the attack till he scaled the works of the enemy and fell wounded in their hands, but not until he had driven them from their position and seen his colors planted on their fortifications.³⁴

This derring-do was glorious, a throw-back to the days of chivalry, but we may ask in our apparently more prosaic age, was it war?

The record of the Old South for upholding honor was seriously marred during the latter part of the Civil War by the great amount of desertion in the Confederate army. Braxton Bragg, commander of the Western army, wrote to President Davis on November 16, 1863, that rigid legislation was necessary to cure the evil of officers and their men remaining absent from their commands. The evil was so great, he commented, that his present effective force did not exceed 40 per cent of the aggregate strength on the muster rolls. This dereliction, he said, was a frightful condition, revealing that the sense of honor in the army was low.³⁵ Although the rate of desertion was appalling after Gettysburg, the desertion of Southern soldiers during the four years of war was lower than that of Northern soldiers, amounting to approximately one desertion out of nine enlistments as compared with the northern ratio of one in seven.

What was the role of honor in the antebellum South? Among its bad effects was that it led to dueling and a hypersensitive sense of dignity and an instant resentment of criticism. Jefferson Davis suffered under this self-defeating quality—one which seriously hampered him as Confederate president in getting along with his congress and in dealing with generals like Joseph Johnston and Pierre Beauregard, who were as proud and thin-skinned as he was. It contributed to the financial ruin of thousands of Southerners who recklessly endorsed the notes of relatives and friends and, when they failed, refused to take cover under the bankruptcy laws. It led to a chivalric treatment of Southern white women, but, as Mrs. Chesnut observed in her diary, it did not apply to helpless black women. The honor of the South was at stake in 1860, Southerners thought, and this mistaken notion was an important factor in bringing on the secession movement. On the other hand, a high sense of honor was responsible for some of the finest qualities in the Southern character. The notion of chivalry was carried over into the desperate fighting of the Civil War. It was a preeminent characteristic of many Southern generals, notably Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, and Leonidas Polk. The Southerner of this period was distinguished by a charming courtesy, a strong sense of dignity, and a deep loyalty to family and friends, outgrowths of the code of honor.

Today the devotion to honor of an earlier period in our history seems to have greatly diminished, so that we may ask, "What has happened to honor today?" It is a live question, not merely an academic one. The debate that now is occurring on the validity of the honor code at West Point, caused by a great cheating scandal there, confronts the old standards with the so-called realistic standards of the "new morality," based on behavioristic psychology. In this debate the example of honor displayed by the Old South at its best needs to be brought to the attention of Americans.

FOOTNOTES

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THE FRENCH CONNECTION 1776-1782*

By J. H. Plumb

Two great historic figures—men who merge into myth—remain of the alliance between France and the revolutionary forces of America—Lafayette and Benjamin Franklin. And like most myths time has changed them, clothing the reality in a web of romance. The young Marquis de Lafayette, plunging ashore on North Island, North Carolina, is seen as the personification of those forces in France which yearned for liberty, for freedom from the oppressive hierarchical régime of absolutist France. These young French idealists found justification for their attitudes in the simplicity, the honesty, the ruggedness and equality of American life—or so we are told. In contrast, Benjamin Franklin at Passy symbolized for the sophisticated Parisian *salons* the true philosopher—natural, unaffected, wise, free from all artifice. The text books tell us that the ease of his presence, the extraordinary sanity of his views, his undeviating patriotism, his strength and gravity, rallied all that was best and generous in French society to the American cause. Lafayette, back from America, transmuted warmth into action; standing symbolically behind the serried ranks of Rochambeau's troops at Yorktown, are Lafayette, with his sword held aloft, and Franklin, quietly smiling like a Chinese sage. Both men have left a profusion of papers behind, certain of their place in history and not at all unmindful of the image which they wished to display to posterity. Great men though both undeniably were, the writers of history, and so posterity, have been over-generous in their praise. Both men may not have had feet of clay, but there was certainly clay in their boots.

Their dazzling prominence has thrown a shadow on many men; particularly is this true of Lafayette, who was only one of many foreigners whose help was of great aid to the revolution in the early stages. Who now thinks with gratitude of de Kalb, of Steuben, of Pulaski? Or of Lafayette's compatriots—Pontigiband, Armand, Desportail, Vrigny, La Colombe, Fleury, and the rest? And although both Arthur Lee and Silas Deane have been rescued from relative obscurity, it is the Franklin of the salon, the *cher Papa* of the witty, sophisticated middle-aged hostesses, that continues to steal the limelight. To understand the French con-

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nection in 1776, one must dig deeper than the simplicities symbolised by Lafayette and Franklin, important though they were.

Early in August 1775, a large coach rattled into Metz and deposited the Duke of Gloucester, the brother of George III, at the door of the military governor, the Comte de Broglie, with whom he was to dine. Gloucester was thirty-two years of age. He had outraged the Court, the government, and the King in particular, by first living with, then marrying the bastard daughter of Sir Edward Walpole, the son of George II's great minister, Sir Robert. The bitterness of the Court, mountainous debts, and ill-health, had driven him from England. And many politicians, as well as the Court, heaved a sigh of relief as Gloucester and his bourgeois bride left Dover, for he, at loggerheads with his brother, favoured the radicals and the firebrands, particularly John Wilkes—the most skillful agitator opposed to the King. Indeed, one of the reasons why the Comte de Broglie was so eager to be his host was that Gloucester could give him first-hand information about the support, or lack of it, that George III's American policy enjoyed in England. Like all of the Hanoverian royal family, Gloucester talked volubly and indiscreetly. Influential men in London, powerful men in the provinces, a great number of members of Parliament, all were bitterly opposed to his brother's policy and his brother's ministers, Gloucester informed Broglie, and the words were as sweet to Broglie's ear as they were soothing to Gloucester's bruised ego. Indeed, Gloucester painted so dramatic a picture of the divisions in England that he seemed to hint at a nation on the verge of civil war, the provinces in an uproar, and Ireland in turmoil. In later years, writing of this dinner, Lafayette recalls how he closely cross-examined the Duke and, realising how liberty and freedom were oppressed in England as well as America, was fired by a desire to spring to America's aid. Alas, nothing is less likely to be true. Lafayette was a shy, reticent boy, eighteen years of age, young looking for his years, who had recently been sent to Metz to do garrison duty under his relative, Broglie. He was a naive young aristocrat of small experience of the world. Doubtless he sat silent amongst the equerries, but certainly his imagination was fired, and this was the starting point of Lafayette's journey to fame.

The dinner, however, had far more important consequences than stirring the warm and passionate heart of a young adolescent. Broglie was a man of the greatest consequence, banished to Metz in semi-disgrace because of the defeats he had suffered at the hands of the British; like so many men of his class—the élite aristocratic generals of the French Army—he longed for revenge for the humiliations inflicted on France by England during the Seven Years War (1756-63.) What rankled

most was the Treaty of Paris. They loathed the arrogance of the British Commissioner installed at Dunkirk, who made certain that the moles and ramparts remained destroyed so that this superb naval base could not be put into a state of readiness. The swift French corsairs based there had preyed happily on the slow rich British convoys beating their way up the Channel or across the North Sea from the Baltic. Even more bitter were the memories of what they had lost—Canada, the earliest of all French colonies, along with France's commercial posts in India and its trading forts in Senegal. Worst of all, as Vergennes, the French foreign minister, wrote to Louis XVI at his accession, was the humiliation, the shame of defeat. As Vergennes gloomily noted, the French government, which used to be the greatest of European powers, was no longer consulted. It had become a mere spectator of great events. French pride had been dipped in gall.

The humiliation, the shame of the defeat, bore so heavily on France for reasons not commonly realised. France possessed men, money, and materials in a profusion that totally outstripped England. France's population was some twenty-six million to England's eight or nine, but the close alliance with Spain (the Family Compact) weighted France's favorable balance by another ten million. Furthermore, France had on call some 300,000 military men and a professional standing army of about 140,000—very well equipped and excellently trained, whereas the British standing army, loathed by Englishmen and constantly under attack by Parliament, numbered about 35,000. Although near to equality in naval affairs, England was, of course, seriously outnumbered by the combined fleets of France and Spain, and it was for this reason that the British always dreaded a war against France without the support of the Dutch. The material riches of France were commensurate with its population—it possessed excellent armament industries, indeed, the best in the world, backed by great financial resources. But here, at least, England could look eye to eye with France, for England had developed a sophisticated and stable financial system that bred confidence not only in the British people, but also the Dutch, who invested heavily in British funds. Without great financial resources England could never have hoped to defeat the Goliath of France, but money bought mercenary soldiers, notably the Hessians, whose discipline and accuracy of fire the Americans were soon to taste. Even so, the British politicians feared France; indeed they had been scared by their own victories in the Seven Years War—in 1754, the great *Annus Mirabilis*, Wolfe stormed Quebec, the French fleets were humiliated at Lagos and Quiberon Bay, and even the British army scored one of its rare victories in Europe—at Minden—the first for fifteen years. Chatham, the architect of these victories,

had wanted to smash France and Spain for good, but his colleagues were appalled by the enormity of his vision of Europe. They backtracked. And the Treaty of Paris, in 1763, loathed and hated by the French, was, in fact, an extraordinarily generous treaty, giving back to France almost all, except Canada, that Britain had conquered. This was done quite deliberately in the hope of avoiding another war with France. A severe settlement, many argued, must lead to renewed wars, and the British did not in their hearts believe that they could go on defeating the greatest military power in Europe over and over again. Smug in their own generosity, few English statesmen appreciated the deep sense of ignominy and shame that gnawed at the hearts of Frenchmen such as the Comte de Broglie; for so great a power as France to be humiliated by a small nation of shopkeepers was too bitter.

The Treaty of Paris naturally affected the destiny of America; the expulsion of the French from Canada which, at that time, reached down to the headwaters of the Mississippi, freed the West. Indeed, one of the reasons that influenced the British government in choosing to take Canada, rather than the rich sugar islands of Guadaloupe and Martinique, was that military pressure on the frontiers of the American colonies would be relieved. Whether Britain was wise can be endlessly debated. The sugar isles gave the French not only commercial riches, but superb naval bases from which its fleets could threaten not only Jamaica and the West Indies trade, but also the coasts of the southern states. Chatham would have seized both possessions—Canada and the West India Isles—from France, for he felt that the policy of compromise was bound to leave a dagger pointing at her colonies. He was right, for that dagger was to become the executioner's axe at Yorktown. The American colonies, therefore, either at peace or at war with England, lay at the very heart of the strategic confrontation between America and France.

There was a soldier of fortune present at that dinner at Metz, who knew the importance and the intricacy of this strategic situation; this was de Kalb, a Prussian soldier long in the service of France, a man of great experience in all the arts of war, specialising in logistics and fortification, who had already spent time in America reconnoitering the situation. A tough professional of excellent judgment, he was as confident of France's opportunities as de Broglie and as eager for action as young Lafayette.

And there were scores of soldiers, aristocrats like de Broglie, scattered throughout the garrisons of France, longing, praying for revenge, and rejoicing in the American opportunity. England's espionage system was admirable, and her diplomats were alive to the threats, but what should

French policy be? Vergennes, the foreign minister, wanted war so long as Spain was a committed ally, but Spain was vulnerable both in America and in the West Indies, and to persuade Spain took time. In any case France needed time to reflect. Also, in the early stages of the conflict, Louis XV, an aging *roué*, gave his ministers little encouragement; his death in 1774, however, revitalised the administration and strengthened its resolve. Nevertheless, for many years the French government had been playing its own war game, plotting and planning how to get a military advantage over Britain. It had sent its master-spies and agents to London, the bisexual Chevalier d'Eon, who dressed and lived as a woman, and Beaumarchais, the creator of *Figaro*, whose contacts were complex and far-ranging. They planned possible invasions of England. They listened to the radicals and tested the opposition to Lord North's policy. They learned of the weaknesses of the British army, the unpreparedness of its navy. The troubles in America were music to their ears. Their reports, always optimistic and eager for conflict, flowed into the Quai d'Orsay. Aware of their activities in general, if not always apprised of their detailed information, the British government, through its Ambassador Stormont in Paris, thrust out its jaw, telling the French bluntly that aid to the rebels would mean war. By the accession of Louis XVI the momentum of involvement was mounting, although Louis XVI and his advisors still hoped to avoid a direct confrontation with Britain. They were no longer complete masters of the situation. The game became a reality.

As soon as it became a shooting war, the Americans needed France desperately; they could manufacture gunpowder, but nothing else, and their financial resources were ludicrously small. America's urgent needs at first made the French government even more reluctant, for they did not wish to commit themselves to a lost cause and have to confront an armed Britain who might take a quick revenge. And, as great nations are wont to do in such circumstances, they tried to make the best of both worlds—give large scale succour to the colonists, but protest their neutrality to Britain. What could the King do if idealistic boys like Lafayette chartered a boat and sailed as knight errants to America? What could the King do if his subjects sold arms, ammunition, or even made loans to the colonists? How could he prevent soldiers of fortune, such as de Kalb—after all, a Prussian—seeking fame, glory, and riches with Washington's army?

These were wonderfully muddled waters for shark-toothed men to fish in. Naturally armaments were the first necessity and the prime preoccupation, not only of Silas Deane and Benjamin Franklin, but also of

Beaumarchais, who was as creative in action as in writing. He saw a golden opportunity to aid himself as well as America. Two million francs were to be given by the government to his cover company Hortalez. This money was to be used to buy up-to-date weapons for the royal arsenals which were to be shipped to America, a free gift, suitably disguised, from the French Court to the American people. After the government had paid over the money, the waters became muddier and muddier. Beaumarchais realised that his government would have to conceal its interest. Such a golden opportunity for fraud was irresistible. Deane was himself involved in these murky dealings, Beaumarchais sent an agent to deal with Congress who did not discover for some years that the French government had intended these armaments as a free gift. Fortunately, they had been quick to pay Beaumarchais, whose descendants were still suing for payment long after his death. Like many a golden dream, it proved a mirage. Deane and Beaumarchais were not alone in dabbling in armaments: Benjamin Franklin was also involved for personal profit as well as through patriotic zeal. So complex a situation in which the French government had to act in the dark through agents who were far from scrupulous, made wheeling and dealing easy. Some armaments, too, proved wretched when bought, but essential supplies got to America—the rifles, the guns, the shells, without which there could have been no victory. Deane may have been a British agent, Franklin was careless about secrecy, and Beaumarchais' ebullient exhibitionism bordered on the suicidal. At Le Havre, *incognito* in order to expedite a ship loaded with armaments, he appeared at its theatre to rehearse his play, *The Barber of Seville*. It is not surprising that the British knew exactly what aid was being sent to America. But so slow were communications, so leisurely the reaction to military intelligence, that Beaumarchais' boats mostly got through.

As with armaments, so with men. The Court was forced by its official policy of neutrality to show disapproval, particularly of Lafayette and the young Noailles, who showed no discretion whatsoever—who does at 19?—about their intention. Naturally, they were ardent proselytisers amongst their young aristocratic friends. Noailles' family checked their knight-errant, but Lafayette, who enjoyed the control of his own immense fortune, could not be stopped by his family, and the Court's measures to stop him were always half-hearted and always too late. Also they were eager to get de Kalb into America; on his judgement and military intelligence they could wholly rely, and Lafayette's boat was most convenient. It is not surprising that the order to arrest Lafayette arrived too late. When de Kalb reached America with young Lafayette, they found plenty of foreign military adventurers swarming around

Congress demanding the highest commissions, and most of them from Silas Deane. Many American commanders were naturally irritated to see Frenchmen promoted above them. Congress itself was growing restive, yet the importance, the need for France was so great, that most of them got what they wanted and Lafayette himself became a general under the avuncular care of George Washington.

The early days of the French connection need not be told—most of the French fought well, most of them took a gloomy view of American fighting ability, generalship, and capacity to survive. De Kalb formed a low opinion of Washington's abilities that was only dispelled by Valley Forge. At times even Lafayette's enthusiasm wilted. But his dreams sustained him—the reconquest of Canada, a descent on India, the expulsion of the British from the West Indies; there was nothing mean about Lafayette's hopes and fantasies.

It was England's inability to make the kill which finally convinced the government of France that outright support should not be withheld. This was strategically right, it always had been, but now it was tactically correct. Yet, as Louis XVI's advisers well knew, such a course of action meant war with England. England's control of the Atlantic had to be broken or evaded if first class French troops were to be landed in America, and without French troops, stalemate or compromise was a more likely end to the war than American victory. But the only hope of overcoming the English navy was with a combined Franco-Spanish naval force. France could not commit herself openly, therefore, to the American cause without Spain.

Spain was slow to move. Spain claimed vast unmapped territories in the West and South West of America. Louisiana belonged to Spain, and the Mississippi she thought of as a Spanish river. Florida, now British, had been Spanish, and Spain wanted it back. Would a victorious America respect her territorial rights? Her government doubted it. Also the Spaniards thought that one successful revolution might lead to another—and next time in their possessions in South America. The Spanish ministers might be dilatory, but they enjoyed clarity of vision.

Had this been all, Spain would have been impossible to move, but Spain, too, had suffered scaring humiliations. Gibraltar, a part of the Spanish homeland, was in British possession; Jamaica, in Spanish eyes a nest of detestable mercantile pirates who preyed on her colonies, was almost as bad. To get Gibraltar back, to win Jamaica, and to have Florida restored made the American gamble seem just worthwhile. It was hard going for France's diplomats, but they knew from long experience how to handle Spain, and, alas for England, they had more sur-

prising and unusual success elsewhere. British imperious handling of neutral shipping had irritated and outraged the Dutch—their age-long allies. And so French diplomats were able to persuade the Dutch to keep out of the conflict, to declare their neutrality, which was a bitter blow for England, who needed the Dutch navy to counterbalance France's acquisition of the Spanish.

And so, finally, the American revolt became a global war, the third act of the great imperial conflict between France and Britain, spelling the end of the possibility of Anglo-American compromise. There had been great sympathy in England for the American cause; once France and Spain were allied with America, that sympathy died, drowned in a surge of patriotism. The City of Bristol, which had been ardently pro-American, turned round completely and supported Lord North. Until the entry of the French, complete victory, although desirable, was not necessary for the British. Stalemate, combined with soaring inflation and an unpaid army on the brink of dissolution, might have strengthened the still powerful loyalist party to secure peace. Time, therefore, so long as help from Europe was kept to a minimum, was on England's side. With France and Spain as belligerents, however, victories became essential—victories over the colonists and victories over Spain and France. The British knew that Gibraltar would be invested, that France's allies in India would take the offensive, that Jamaica would become a target, and that English commerce throughout the world would become a convenient and easy prey for privateers. And England had *no* allies. Without the Dutch her navy was outnumbered, and her army always had been pitifully small. Quick victories were essential, and quick victories eluded England.

French tactics were simple—to threaten England's possessions in the West Indies, to draw off the British navy so that seasoned French troops could be landed in America. The plan was easy, the accomplishment difficult and muddled. The Americans asked prudently for four thousand men—sufficient to help, yet unlikely to be regarded as *the* decisive army. The point was rapidly taken by the French, who elected to send eight thousand men, including some cavalry with horses. Supplies, of course, for the eight thousand men had to go with them. Almost incredibly quickly, by eighteenth century standards, seven thousand five hundred men were assembled at Brest. Alas, there were no boats to take them across the Atlantic. The Spaniards, already myopically preoccupied with Gibraltar, could send none. The Spaniards also were huffed because the French refused to send their army to recover Florida. So in the end only five thousand five hundred men sailed, and not a single horse—not even

the Commander-in-Chief's. The decision was a tough one, for Rochambeau parted with two tried war-horses which he could never replace, but it was two horses or twenty men. Rochambeau chose the men.

A typical decision, easy perhaps for Rochambeau, but it would have been almost impossible for most European generals, conscious of their status and dignity. But Rochambeau possessed great qualities and great integrity. A professional soldier for all of his life, he had steadily risen through ability, sound judgement, and honesty—qualities which he was now to display at their best. The logistics of the expedition were admirable; everything went with it, clothes, tents, as well as guns and bullets. And most important of all, money. Rochambeau was well aware of the danger of a French army in America. After all, the French alliance had created considerable distaste; many Americans were still English enough to hate the French and to suspect France's motives. There was quite a strong anti-French party in Congress led by the Lees. A few rapes, a little pillaging, demands to Congress for money, and the French would be hated more than the British and as much as the Hessians. Rochambeau resolved to pay for everything that his army required, and his experience told him that he would have to pay grossly inflated prices; that was the nature of war. He demanded and got eight million livres for the expedition—a vast sum by eighteenth century standards. The army was of high quality and, as if to impress the Americans with the sincerity of their intentions, some of the great aristocratic families were with it—the Duc de Lauzun, with six hundred men of his own family corps, the Légion de Dauzun; the Marquis de Laval—Montmorency was there, and at last, the Vicomte de Noailles, the ardent friend of Lafayette, amongst scores of others, eager to revenge the ignominy of France.

Yet at first it looked as if that ignominy might never be obliterated, but only strengthened. Before landing at Rhode Island, Rochambeau had heard of the fall of Charleston. He found the American forces dispirited, ill-equipped, and unpaid. Inflation was rampant, and the English stranglehold on Charleston and also New York encouraged defeatism and strengthened those drawn to compromise. He sent his son, Vicomte Rochambeau, back at once to France, requesting a second division, more supplies, and enough cash for George Washington to pay his army. The young Rochambeau exchanged the gloom of New England for the gloom of Versailles. The Spanish were obsessed with Gibraltar and reluctant to commit any forces except in Florida. The loss of Charleston depressed Louis XVI; and neither he nor his ministers were relieved by what they heard of the American army—the news of the Philadelphia mutinies had already reached Versailles. Another British victory, and the end would be

in sight. France would then be mercilessly savaged in the Caribbean. Another long war seemed to be in prospect, and France's treasury was on the point of exhaustion. Tough decisions were taken: no more troops were to go to America. Rochambeau must win or lose with what he had. But six million livres, enough for Washington's army, was scrapped together. Rochambeau was told that if opportunity and his own tactical situation allowed, de Grasse would be permitted to leave his West Indian station to help in a combined attack on the British during the next campaigning season. Nevertheless, de Grasse's main purpose—to attack Jamaica with Spain—was his first priority.

In war luck helps, although it rarely decides the outcome. Perhaps luck, however, was more decisive in the last year of the revolutionary war than in most. Washington's and Rochambeau's armies met outside New York amidst much mutual admiration of the differing qualities of each—the splendour, the discipline, the professional efficiency of the French striking the Americans; the simplicity, toughness, and dedication of the Americans surprising the French. Nevertheless, Rochambeau had little hope of victory. In his judgement it was hopeless to attempt to take New York. It was doubtful if de Grasse could get his fleet over the harbour bar in order to be of material help, and Clinton's forces were too strong. More than half of the burning summer was passed before Washington began to realise that he was wrong and Rochambeau's strategic sense correct, and that the right British army to attack was Cornwallis's in Virginia. De Grasse settled that question, as indeed he was to settle the war.

De Grasse saw his opportunity for enduring fame. His Spanish counterpart in the West Indies was, as Spanish admirals tended to be, slow, very slow in his preparations for the attack in Jamaica. Closing one eye like a Nelson, de Grasse exceeded his instructions and left his Spanish ally for two months, taking with him nearly four thousand soldiers and, better still, a million livres. Rochambeau had informed de Grasse that he would be wanted either at Chesapeake or New York. De Grasse signalled Rochambeau that Chesapeake was his goal—he only had eight weeks to spare; every day was vital, and he, too, feared the harbour bar at New York. So he was en route to Chesapeake. Clinton saw the American and French armies strike camp and march south, but he did not follow, for he still considered New York might be the ultimate target. Miracle followed miracle. De Grasse landed his troops on the St. James River, without resistance; the American and French armies arrived there unmolested by the British; and the French fleet at Rhode Island made a successful rendezvous. Three armies and two navies spread over one thousand six hun-

dred miles of land and ocean came neatly together; considering the logistic difficulties and the casualness of eighteenth century communications, it borders on the incredible. As in an elaborate, but deadly, game of chess, the outcome was so clear to Cornwallis that he rapidly threw in his hand. There was not much battle, and singularly little bloodshed at Yorktown, but what there was fell mainly on the French, whose casualties were twice those of the American forces. Even so, they were tiny: fifty-two killed, one hundred and five wounded. Everyone spoke glowingly of the dash and élan of Lafayette, and his young aristocratic friends. But it was de Grasse's fleet in the river that had sealed Cornwallis's fate.

De Grasse had had the luck—for complex reasons which included bad British judgement—to hold temporary command of the sea, and so secure the fame he pursued. Alas, fame proved fickle, for the man who made Yorktown possible was, within twelve months, defeated and disgraced at the Battle of the Saints, captured alive on his own flagship. But for Rochambeau and Lafayette, and the glittering army of the French aristocrats, the next year was a delightful round of dinners, balls, and enthusiastic girls. The French army was meticulously correct, paying stiff, usually outrageous prices for all that it needed; so mutual happiness abounded. The diplomats took over, for Britain had conceded defeat—surprisingly so, but Parliament was restive. The country-gentlemen who sat there could not face the cost of a long, protracted global war. And the French, too, with an empty treasury, were as eager as the British to extricate themselves from America, especially after de Grasse's defeat in 1782.

Yet peace, like war, has its capacity to surprise. The Jeremiahs in England had bemoaned the possible loss of the American colonies for over a decade. It would, they said, be the economic ruin of Britain. They echoed Chatham's immortal words that America "was the fountain of our wealth." They forecast that France would be there, drinking deeply. There would be no drop left for Britain. In fact, British trade to America sped to dizzying heights after peace was signed. If the French did not gain America's trust, at least they won back not only a few islands in the Caribbean, but also, and much more important, their self-respect; they did so, however, at the cost of an empty treasury and the certainty that sooner or later Britain would seek her revenge, as she did, a revenge that culminated in the shattering French defeat at Waterloo.

The reluctant warriors, the Spaniards, did better in territory by regaining Florida, East and West, and securing Louisiana, but, alas, they did not recover their self-respect, for Gibraltar remained firmly British.

Neither France nor Frenchmen gained much from their expensive American alliance; Mr. du Pont de Nemours, perhaps, fared best with his huge fortune made from gunpowder. Lafayette, as few adolescents do, realised his dreams of glory. Beaumarchais got nothing but years of litigation, Rochambeau only a statue outside the White House. The rest of the glittering cavalcade, the like of which America was never to see again, took back little but the memory of American girls. The Prince de Broglie could never forget the sparkling eyes of Betsy Brown of Providence. The Comte de Ségur, however, took a deeper, if no more lasting, impression with him, but one, too, shared by many of his young aristocratic companions. "I leave," he wrote, "a country where one follows a simple code of simple laws, and respecting good morals, one is happy and tranquil. . . . I was treated as a brother everywhere in America. I saw only public confidence, hospitality and cordiality. . . . I know a country cannot long preserve morals as pure as this, but if it keeps them for a century, is a century of happiness nothing?"

The revolutionary generations in America and France died away, and most remarkable, most ironic of all, when, in the nineteenth century, all the countries of Europe were pouring people into America, scarcely a Frenchman came.

THE END OF MUDDLING THROUGH*

By W. D. McElroy

If there is such a thing as American science, surely in this Bicentennial year we should credit its founding to Benjamin Franklin. Two hundred years ago Franklin was in the forefront, internationally as well as nationally, in applying rational analysis to the phenomena of nature and man. He nicely demonstrated the relationship of theory and practice, for several of his inventions were immediately useful. And yet we all know that science was neither a critical factor in the Revolution nor in the daily lives of Franklin's countrymen. The word science does not appear in the Constitution; science had little influence on any of the notable actions in those early days of the Republic.

Today, however, even a casual inspection reveals that science and its wise use for all mankind is absolutely central to our present and future. In a very real sense, it is the advent of science which distinguishes us and our thinking from our forefathers in 1776. As we look to the future, science looms larger, forcing even laymen to take an interest in and make difficult decisions on science—its policy, development, and use. For this reason the Bicentennial gives us an appropriate opportunity to examine very critically the present and future role of our scientific estate.

To begin, what are some of the appropriate questions we should be asking ourselves at this time? Let me pose just a few.

What is the state of our scientific enterprise in this landmark year? What are the prospects for American science as we enter the third century of our national life? How can we harness science to better use and avoid damaging side effects? What is, or can be, the role of science in alleviating some of the world's almost paralyzing problems? How critical are sound universities for the healthy development of American basic science?

Let us first look at the health of science in America today. My overall, capsule view is that we have a fundamentally vigorous, vastly productive enterprise of great strength and with surprising popular support. In virtually every field of science we observe a measurable margin of superiority, both qualitatively and quantitatively. We have, in my opinion, an educational system which generally encourages and then

*A version of this essay was delivered as a Franklin Lecture at Auburn University on April 21, 1976.

provides a superb science education for many of our bright young people. By and large, our scientific establishment is reasonably well nourished, and our technical support services are probably unmatched anywhere, as a recent publication of the National Science Board, *Science Indicators*, 1974, suggests.

There are, however, according to this same report, some disturbing trends which do not augur well for the future. For example, our proportion of Gross National Product spent for research and development has declined steadily over the past decade, in sharp contrast to the growing GNP portion earmarked for R&D in Russia, West Germany, and Japan. The favorable picture I have sketched will not continue if this funding trend continues. I do not know just how much we should invest in science, but I believe a careful review of the state of each field and the opinions of the best scientists working on the major problems in those fields would suggest a modest increase—say 20 percent—in our research budget and probably a larger increase in expenditures for certain major demonstration projects.

It came as some comfort to the science community to learn, through the National Board Report, that a majority of the general public believe that science and technology had changed life for the better; only five percent felt science had changed life for the worse. Furthermore, this report (itself a piece of social science) revealed the splendid news that scientists as a group placed second in occupational prestige, just after physicians. Engineers ranked third. Fortunately, the survey gave no rankings for university administrators and elected officials.

While it is clear that we white-coated revealers of life's mysteries have won the popular-image battle, it is also true that both within and without science there are some serious intellectual challenges to some of our most sacred beliefs. Within the popular culture two fictional scientists—Dr. Frankenstein and Dr. Strangelove—are, to say the least, unsettling characters. Frankenstein created a monster he could not control; Strangelove's science completely eliminated his morality. Both figures are caricatures, of course, but both contain enough reality to be disturbing to anyone. Too, the so-called counter-culture has not been lax in attacking the conventional view of science. Only a few years ago—less than a decade, in fact—Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* was for a time a best seller on college campuses. As I understand Professor Roszak, his main point seemed to be that scientific objectivity dictated that reason was the sole access to reality, that this scientific approach deliberately ignored all personal involvement, emotion, and the unmeasurable subjective aspects of reality. Suffice it to say I don't sub-

scribe to his views—I believe he constructs a too neat strawman—but there is no denying the influence of this cast of thought. Professor Gerald Holton recognized and understood this current when he said, “We thus seem to be in a crisis of reason in which commitment to rational knowledge as a source of human freedom is being seriously challenged. It is clear that concern with this situation goes far beyond science and also involves scholars in social and humanistic science.”

A large number of thoughtful people, largely influenced by the last decade's environmental movement, have raised serious doubts about the unchecked advance of science and technology. All of us shudder at the environmental damage done by the industrialization of our society. For too many years the volume of smoke belching from the mill was an index to progress and prosperity. So dazzled were we by the explosion of convenient inventions in the twentieth century that we came to believe that those in white coats or those operating computers would solve every problem, right every wrong. And of course scientists did little to discourage this view. It is always pleasant to be a priest in the sanctuary of the future. By now I believe the initial popular overreaction on environmental issues has about run its course, and we are settling into a more mature stage where the complexities—especially the economic ones—are better appreciated and examined more systematically. Our new sophistication forces us to weigh alternatives, to consider long- and short-term advantages and disadvantages, and to speculate on the secondary and even tertiary effects of an action. For example, we now appreciate better the pros and cons of certain pesticides. We saw the dangerous ramifications of their use in our affluent society and banned them; we also understand how these same chemicals markedly increased agricultural productivity in nations where more food was essential to survival. Unquestionably, I conclude, today's emphasis upon environmental quality has had a strong, beneficial influence upon the community of scientists and engineers.

Another challenge to this community, one affecting any assessment of the current state of science in 1976, concerns the imponderables of genetic engineering, more specifically the safety standards for work with recombinant DNA. The dangers were first brought to our attention by a National Academy of Sciences' committee, chaired by Professor Paul Berg of Stanford, which called for a worldwide moratorium on certain kinds of experiments. Although the biologists took the initiative on this issue, Congress may hold hearings on the subject and perhaps legislate even stricter guidelines. As the public begins to grasp the implications of genetic manipulation, it is likely that the policy question will be decided, not by the scientists, but by our elected officials.

To sum up my views of the general state of American science, I believe our scientific enterprise in the Bicentennial year is in reasonably good shape. By and large I regard the ideological challenges—with all their stresses and strains—as healthy and generally therapeutic for the science community. The net result has been that all of us—scientists and laymen—are becoming more sophisticated about the issues. The complexities, the dangers, the opportunities—all suggest we have passed beyond the simple belief that somehow science is good and will solve all of our problems, that salvation is but one laboratory discovery away. It is well that this period is behind us, for today we are on the edge of a decisive stage in the history of man, and to cope with this reality we need very great sophistication, some luck, and much wisdom.

So far the scientific community has always been able to respond effectively to a crisis situation, for in a number of dramatic instances we seem to have matched talent and funding to insure success. We have the experience of developing the atomic bomb in World War II, the space effort after Sputnik was launched, and more recently the mobilization of effort to overcome the energy problem. There is no question that science has gained new resources and respectability from these crisis issues. But is this the proper motive? I doubt it. Being right for the wrong reasons may have certain short term advantages, but in the long run the consequences to science may be quite dangerous. Crises are shortlived in the public mind, and that same kind of thinking seems to carry over into funding patterns. Certain programs are funded generously for a short period of time, and then phased out as new concerns catch the public and legislative fancy. While these oscillations are certainly the prerogative of our collective democratic process and may at times be perfectly valid policy decisions, the effects on the science community often are subtly damaging. For one thing, scientists tend to become entrepreneurs, responding to the source of funds rather than to ideas and the advancement of science. Our manpower training is often altered to respond to the popular crisis, and we begin to distort the whole internal machinery of the scientific process.

I am puzzled by this problem, for I know that the scientific community has had a remarkable record of anticipating virtually all of the problems we now face. Consider the population problem. When the population crisis came to the fore in the 1960's, we could draw upon the considerable and significant research on human reproduction which had been underway for at least 50 years. Thanks to this research, the scientific community was in a position to respond with the knowledge and devices necessary for those who desired to control the size of their

families. Another crisis that was anticipated and predicted some time ago is that pertaining to energy. A number of researchers correctly identified our excessive dependency on oil and gas as a primary source of energy and called for a reexamination of coal and solar possibilities. It seems to me that there is some internal logic in science which encourages the research to look for solutions to unanticipated problems; in effect to have some answers before the problem is defined. Although this internal rhythm of science has served us well in the past, now there is a need to examine systematically a number of potential problems so we may have alternative solutions.

I mention the crisis-driven aspect of the progress of science for a very important reason. While science has generally benefited from this approach in terms of total funding, we have reached a stage in our history where to continue this pattern would be foolhardy, often counter-productive, and, more bluntly, dangerous to the future well-being of the nation and world. Put another way, we have come to the end of a muddling-through approach.

There is no question that we have entered a new era in history. We have all heard the word *crisis* so often that many of us are numbed and move on quickly to other things. But we are now, today, at a critical turning point in the history of man on this planet. We face *literally* a crisis of survival in a reasonably pleasant world. It is a situation unlike any other, for in truth it is a crisis of crises, a giant crisis caused by many interlocking crises. Indeed, these individual problems are so mutually interdependent that it is difficult—almost impossible—to isolate one from the other.

The implications of this stark new reality should be the most important single issue facing the nation in this Bicentennial year. With considerable justification, my parents could anticipate a greatly better world—by their definition—for their grandchildren. In good conscience we cannot say that today; if the future is an extrapolation of the present, my grandchildren will face a grim, unpleasant world which may be more like an anthill than our present society.

I do not pretend to know a proper and grand strategy of survival. Probably there is no single strategy and certainly we should debate all likely combinations. However, there are two primary concepts which I trust will underpin all discussions of this matter.

First, I believe the wise use of science and technology is the key element, although certainly not the total solution, to our survival in a worthwhile world. The science and technology must come from what I

have called our scientific enterprise; its wise use is, in the final analysis, a public decision made through the process of government. In a very real sense, it is the role of science to provide options to our elected officials and other policy makers. To have adequate options, these same policy makers, backed by the will of most citizens, will have to keep the scientific enterprise strong and vital. This means additional and steady federal funding and certain policy changes to insure a greater responsiveness to certain problems by the science community. Let me develop this point in more detail.

In the context of more total resources, we must insure an adequate level of support in the basic sciences and at the same time provide more funds for directed research and development of specific problems. I said earlier that a relatively modest increase in basic science money—I estimate about 20 percent—would suffice, provided there was some protection against vogueish changes in public interest. Adequate support of basic science must be the foundation stone of our national science policy, for from these fundamental investigations spring the new ideas underpinning all future science and technology.

With the health of basic sciences assured as our first priority, we should then invest considerably more funds on directed, problem-oriented research, followed by development and demonstration projects. For these programs I would advocate a close articulation between our universities and federal and industrial laboratories. Each large project should include professional managers, rather than part-time scientists and engineers, for administrative direction. This practical emphasis will not be overly popular with some in the scientific community, yet that additional directed research, built on a strong base of basic research, is the most efficient, most timely way to overcome specific problems, as the example of ERDA, the Energy Research and Development Administration, suggests.

The second concept needed to underpin our strategy for survival has to do with leadership. I see no worthwhile future unless we receive the kind of leadership that brings out the best in us and uses the nation's extraordinary human resources in a more beneficial way. Look, for example, at the present situation with regard to a national energy policy. It is true that the energy situation is very complex and many points are easily debatable. Still, I believe the basic facts are clear, but the policy signals from Washington are anything but clear to me. If our leaders are to lead wisely, they must understand two very important truths: the interrelatedness of the problems, and the fact that virtually every one of our major problems has global implications which often dwarf our

national concerns. The first point is, as the physicist would say, obvious upon inspection. To illustrate the second point, consider the population situation. We are rightfully proud of our current leveling population statistic. But in the long run, does it make much difference if we in the United States approach a stabilized population when the majority of the world's nations are increasing their population at frightening rates?

The population of the world is growing at an unparalleled rate of at least 2.0 percent per annum. (The growth rate in the United States is 1.0; in contrast, the rate for Mexico is 2.4 percent.) It took over a million years from the emergence of man from a primate stock to the year 1830 to reach one billion individuals in the world. In 1930, one hundred years later, world population had increased to two billion individuals; only thirty years later, in 1960, three billion individuals lived on the planet. This year we passed the four billion mark. It is clear that we are on a logarithmic phase of a growth curve after a long lag period. In nature, no animal, plant, or bacterial population has ever maintained a logarithmic phase of growth for very long. The major factors slowing this rate of growth—exhaustion of food supply, disease, accumulation of toxic products—are the effects of some outside lethal agent which kills a high proportion of the population. Any one or all of these factors will force the population back into a lag phase. It is not clear today what the factors will be that will control the world's human population, but control *must* be achieved—if not by man, by nature. Some people feel that the battle to feed the world population is now lost, and that it is a foregone conclusion that by the late 1980's or early 1990's we will have worldwide famines killing millions of people. At this time I see no major solution which would lead me to disagree with this conclusion. The population crisis recently prompted a distinguished group of individuals associated with The Environmental Fund to take out a two-page *ad* in the *Smithsonian* magazine of March 1976. Let me quote the opening paragraphs:

"The World as we know it will likely be ruined before the year 2,000 and the reason for this will be its inhabitants' failure to comprehend two facts. These facts are:

1. World food production cannot keep pace with the galloping growth of population.
2. 'Family planning' cannot and will not, in the foreseeable future, check this runaway growth.

"The momentum toward tragedy is at this moment so great that there is probably no way of halting it. The only hopeful possibility is to reduce the dimensions of the coming disaster.

"We are being misled by those who say there is a serious food shortage. This is not true; world food production this decade is the greatest in history. The problem is too many people . . . it makes no difference whatever how much food the world produces, if it produces people faster."

The Environmental Fund's statement continued:

"Furthermore, our past generosity has encouraged a do-nothing policy in the governments of some developing nations. At the 1974 United Nations meetings in Bucharest and Rome, spokesmen for these nations asserted, incredibly, that they had no population problem. They defended these twin policy statements:

1. The hungry nations have the *right* to produce as many children as they please.
2. Others have the *responsibility* to feed them.

"We believe that these statements are irresponsible and indefensible. Any nation that asserts the right to produce more babies must also assume the responsibility for taking care of them.

The problem clearly is out of hand, and at this stage science has very little to offer in way of a solution. Seemingly about the best we can do is to provide the technical information to those nations who evidence the willingness to use it. Today there are many among us who feel we should not give any nation developmental help until it is prepared to adopt policies leading to zero growth in population.

Obviously, the food problem is directly related to the population crisis. I believe that we must do everything we can to improve agricultural production throughout the world. The annual increase in world population requires that we increase food production by 25 million tons of grain each year just to maintain our present position. In my view we are exporting too much food from this country at the present time. Of course we need to produce more, but we also need to build at least a 90-day reserve in storage. Our food surplus has already become an instrument of foreign policy, and in the future it will be more so if sales or gifts are conditioned upon population policies. I suppose this could be called blackmail, but war, pestilence, and starvation throughout the world are worse.

Now let me comment briefly on the energy situation. The crisis, of course, has developed because of our over-dependence on petroleum and gas for the generation of electricity and for heating and cooling. I believe science eventually will solve the energy problem in a number of different ways, but at present there is only one short-term solution to the United States energy problem—conservation. There are so many different ways to save energy that it is almost ridiculous to consider alternate short-term sources of energy. For example, we lose almost 20 percent of our energy in this country through heat loss in our homes. Here a change in construction standards could, with only modest cost, do wonders. We need to make our technology energy efficient. To cite mundane examples, most toasters heat up so completely on the outside that they cannot be touched; this is an energy loss. Many people will use a large oven at 350° Fahrenheit to bake one or two potatoes; again this is tremendously inefficient. With the proper economic incentives, we are quite capable of

building more efficient devices. Conservation is the important starting point in approaching the energy problem. To date, however, it has not been emphasized strongly enough in our national energy discussions.

Over and above our own oil reserves—and there is some debate as to how much they are—we have other reserves of fossil fuel in large quantities. We have enormous deposits of coal in this country, enough to last for hundreds of years. A huge increase in coal production probably would not be tolerated today because of the environmental damage, but some increased extraction, provided the price is right, can be accommodated without peril to the land. There is also nuclear energy, certainly the most emotion-laden possible source of new energy. After considering the situation carefully, I believe nuclear fission reactors, with exacting safeguards, are probably the most practical solution for the middle-range future. I say this somewhat reluctantly, but, unfortunately, there appears to be no other clear, technology-proven option for ten to twenty years. After that period, I suspect we will have a number of alternate sources of energy at very competitive prices. Then, and only then, we will have the luxury of reconsidering nuclear fission.

What are some of these other energy sources that science and technology should be able to tap and make economically feasible for general use? Solar energy is the primary possibility. To date this field has not been adequately researched, but now R&D expenditures are being rapidly increased—from \$12.5 million in 1972 to well over \$100 million in 1977. Extensive research and demonstrations of solar collectors and fuel cells should be expanded tremendously, for there is a very good possibility that in the next 15 to 25 years direct sun energy could be a major supplementary source of electricity and heat for a large number of homes and factories in this country. Solar energy is of course basically non-polluting and is also a renewable source. Obviously, life on this planet hinges upon the biological use of solar energy, mainly for the growth of food products. In theory there is no reason why we cannot grow and manage fuel farms for the sole purpose of producing fuel that can be later used to generate electricity. Over fifty percent of the carbon fixed on the surface of the earth today ends up in the form of cellulose, a compound that can be degraded and used to make hydrogen. It can also be fermented to make methane and methanol, which in some countries is already a substitute in part for gasoline. During World War I, acetone was made from carbohydrates through a fermentation process. So were glycerol and many other long-chain hydrocarbons, including butanol, butyric acid, and other compounds. It is within the realm of science to tap solar energy through the biological processes and to create products not only for fuel generation but also for food consumption. In this con-

nection, I do not think we have made a sufficient effort to tap the resource of our oceans. In that medium we can grow large quantities of algae of various types which are excellent substitutes for the production of fuel or food.

I might add that research on the conversion of solar power into a liquid fuel—hydrogen is the best candidate—probably can overcome the problem of storing solar energy for use when the sun is not shining. Much of the theory of solar energy is well established. Needed now are massive demonstrations to test the commercial feasibility of such energy. It is just possible, in my opinion, that startling breakthroughs in solar technology in the next decade could make solar energy competitive with nuclear and coal-fired generating plants.

I want to comment briefly now on what we might expect in the biomedical and health research area in the next 25 years. I predict we will see some of the most fantastic advancements that man can imagine, particularly in our ability to detect and correct, very early in the development of a fetus, certain genetic defects. We might even be able to determine whether the fetus might be more susceptible to one type of disease or another and then protect it from the consequences. Infectious disease will not for the most part be a major negative factor in human health. We will be more concerned with many of the degenerative diseases, and here we will see major advances in our understanding of the function of specific organs. We will almost certainly find ways to correct deficiencies at various biological levels, including deficiencies at the cellular level. When these breakthroughs occur, we will then see a major advance in the longevity of human beings. As we increase longevity, however, we will also increase the probability of seeing cells change in a way that will be identified as cancerous. There will be solutions to some of these problems, but we will not see solutions, in my opinion, to all cancer because here we are dealing with some of the most fundamental problems of cellular metabolism. Undoubtedly, we will be able to detect and remove certain types of cancers before they have developed too far, but we will probably see an increase in these abnormal cells in areas which will require either radiation or a unique type of chemotherapy. We will not eliminate cancer as we have eliminated polio. We will see, however, some very interesting and tremendous advances in the biological sciences in general. Fundamentally, the major advances will enable us to transfer genetic information from one organism to another. Let me cite one example which could have far reaching implications for food production and population dynamics. We may very well develop the ability to transfer the nitrogen fixing genome from nitrogen fixing bacteria into other types of plants, such as the various grasses that are now grown in the tropical

reaches of the world. If one could efficiently introduce the nitrogen fixing genome into such plants—for use as either animal or human consumption—we would eliminate in part one of the major problems now facing modern agriculture, the requirement to supply adequate fertilizer for rapid plant growth. This has tremendous implications and in theory the problem should be solvable within the next twenty-five years.

Another great advance will occur with our ability to pull the natural resources from the bottom of the ocean to the surface, where this rich nutrient environment will stimulate tremendous biological growth before it settles back down. In the deep continental shelves there are large amounts of natural resources in the form of nutrients which could, through artificial upwelling, stimulate fantastic growth of fish, algae, and other sources of food. There are already natural examples where this upwelling has occurred—there is one off the coast of Peru which has led to tremendous production of microscopic algae and other forms of food eaten by fish, making the area fantastically productive. There is no reason why, with appropriate sources of energy, we could not stimulate this phenomenon in a number of areas of the oceans.

In contrast with the prevailing European system, we in the United States have chosen to make our major effort in the basic sciences within the university. Again unlike other systems, our university research is inextricably linked to graduate and postdoctoral education. Thus in this country a large portion of basic science activity and virtually all graduate and professional education is the responsibility of the university.

I believe our system has worked very well and has proven its usefulness time and time again. Without denigrating our strong federal and industrial laboratories, our system is more productive and has more self-renewing features than the separate European style research institutes. My point is this: to a very large extent the health of American science, especially basic science, is closely dependent upon the general health of our premier universities. And the so-called research universities, both public and private, are now experiencing difficult fiscal times which sooner or later will affect the quality of research and graduate training. A serious deterioration of the university, not an impossible situation given today's fiscal constraints, would seriously disturb the quality and productivity of both research and graduate education.

Aside from the grant and contract system which provides for individual support and which I assume will continue, what should be done to insure the general health of these precious research universities? My answer at this time is a vastly expanded formulae grant system, with the formulae pegged to total awards. For some years, the National Institutes

and the National Science Foundation have made modest formulae awards. Both programs have been under attack; the NSF program has gone under and the NIH program is barely holding on. The research universities must unite on this issue and bring the problem to the attention of the public and our elected officials, for only with sound universities can we create the healthy environment for a sustained research and training effort. Without its strong university base, United States science cannot make its maximum contribution to the nation and world, a contribution I have said is critical to the future well-being of a rational world.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE SOUTH: A BICENTENNIAL PERSPECTIVE

By W. Davis Lewis

As America begins its third century of nationhood it is clear that the South, long identified as a backward region, has emerged as a focal point of economic growth and technological change. Measured by the values which until recently have held virtually undisputed dominance in an acquisitive culture that has traditionally placed a high premium on material achievement, this is a gratifying state of affairs. Lately, however, a significant shift has been taking place in the national mood as it has become increasingly apparent that modern urban industrialism, whatever its undoubted benefits, represents something less than an un-mixed blessing. Because Southerners are naturally eager to escape from a heritage of relative poverty and economic second-class citizenship, they need to be particularly alert to the paradoxical nuances of the situation in which they find themselves.

Until the present era erupted with frightening suddenness in the troubled decade of the 1960's, most Americans assumed that the benefits of economic growth and technological change were automatic. Persons who declined to share this unquestioning faith were easily dismissed as romantic sentimentalists or misguided opponents of progress. This is no longer the case, for we are gradually attaining a wiser, more balanced perspective. We have begun to understand that the pursuit of economic advantage and technological capacity must be accompanied by a concern for basic human values if mankind is to enjoy a future worth having. It is not only evident that heedless, haphazard growth and the unanticipated results of technological innovation can produce a badly ravaged natural environment; it is also clear that they can inflict heavy damage upon our social and cultural ambience by eroding the quality of life, disrupting what were once workable institutions, and smashing time-honored traditions which still possess meaning and beauty for many people.

These facts, obvious to any reflective observer, have caused some well-meaning critics to oppose growth altogether and to regard technology as an enemy whose depredations must be thwarted at any cost. This perspective, however, is just as seriously unbalanced as its polar opposite, a mania for unrestricted economic expansion and an uncritical acceptance of any and all technological novelties. As Southerners face an exciting yet problematic future, therefore, they would be well ad-

vised to avoid such extremes in devising public policies that are congruent with the present momentous juncture in the history of their region. It is undoubtedly true, for example, that unregulated spasms of technological change could accelerate what John Edgerton, author of *The Americanization of Dixie*, has lamented as a growing trend toward depersonalization, diminished sense of place, and the attrition of community and belonging.¹ But this need not automatically occur. Human beings are able, if they possess the will, to master technology instead of allowing technology to master them.

The writings of Kenneth E. Boulding, Erich Fromm, and Buckminster Fuller, among other analysts of the present predicament of mankind, indicate that we have entered a critical phase of human evolution in which the potential of technology to be used for good, as well as for ill, is dramatically increasing.² As Southerners grapple with the issues which the next few decades are certain to pose, they will need a sense of historical perspective regarding the relationship between technology and other aspects of culture. Throughout the past, different styles of technological activity have had a significant impact upon the way people view themselves and their interaction with the world around them. Such a process will continue in the future. This essay will discuss three stages of human development, each characterized by its own dominant technological mode: the tool-using stage, the age of machinery, and finally the new era in which we now find ourselves, in which mankind has become the potential master or slave, as the case may be, of cybernetic devices and systems. Each of these stages has important implications for the South at its present crossroads of change and opportunity.

Humanity and Tools

Long before our primitive ancestors had emerged from remote antiquity, mankind had become well accustomed to the use of tools. Until very recently, tools were humanity's chief means of technological achievement. By using tools our forebears evolved from wandering hunters and nomadic herders of animals into agriculturists who lived in settled communities and then, as their powers of invention continued to grow, built the great urban centers that flourished in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and the Roman Empire. However crude the earliest implements of stone, bone, or wood may appear to the modern museum-goer, they possess profound significance when seen in a proper perspective. As anthropologist Sherwood Washburn has aptly stated, "It was the success of the simplest tools that started the whole trend of human evolution and led to the civilizations of today."³

Throughout history, human beings have derived a sense of psychological satisfaction from the coordination of the contriving brain and the skillful hand in the purposeful use of tools. As Washburn and other students of primitive technology have emphasized, tools are literally extensions of the human body. It is a universal characteristic of tools that they are shaped in part to conform to a specific feature of the human anatomy, usually the hand. Thus the relationship between man and tool is participatory and intimate.

One of the deep rewards experienced by persons who use tools deftly is the warm, self-enhancing feeling known as "pride of craftsmanship." It is a feeling with which the skilled artisans of the ancient world were familiar, and which gave joy and satisfaction to the master stone cutters, masons, carpenters, glass makers, and metal workers who built the magnificent cathedrals of medieval and early modern Europe, each of whom knew the self-fulfilling awareness of offering a special, personal talent to the community and to God.⁴

The pioneering settlers who tamed the North American wilderness and laid the foundations of our own country were also familiar with the simple but nevertheless vital satisfactions stemming from a tool-using way of life. Without denying the hardships of existence in pre-industrial times, the blisters and the backaches, we can still appreciate the sense of accomplishment which our ancestors gained from the deft manipulation of the broadaxes, gouges, froes, adzes, chisels, molding planes, frame saws, augers, drawknives, bitstocks, scythes, cradles, and hayforks so lovingly depicted in such evocative books as Eric Sloane's *A Museum of Early American Tools* or Jared van Wagenen's *The Golden Age of Homespun*. If, as van Wagenen admits, life in those days was often "narrow and hard, lacking in privilege or opportunity and filled only with eternal toil," it engendered what he justly celebrates as "many splendid qualities of heart and brain." One such quality was the sense of self-reliance which our forebears derived from subduing a stubborn environment with the work of their own hands.⁵

In a culture dominated by tools, there was no reason for people to feel alienated from technology, which still possessed "human scale." Tools were the everyday allies of mankind in a ceaseless struggle for existence. Furthermore, as accounts of early American "house raisings" and "barn raisings" remind us, tools fitted naturally into a healthy pattern of community life. In the America of yesterday the welfare of any settlement, small or large, depended upon the skills of its craftsmen, each of whom could easily see how his art and dexterity benefited his fellow citizens. Today, when most necessities of life are produced by automated in-

dustries or heavily mechanized farms and brought to market from hundreds or thousands of miles away, this self-enhancing sense of community interdependence has been correspondingly weakened.

It is revealing that among the dissidents of our own time, most persons who profess to hold an "anti-technological" attitude are not hostile to tools and implements. On the contrary, they throng to craft fairs where time-honored manual arts are practiced. Their hatred is directed not toward tools but toward machines and what they perceive as sterile, inhuman technocratic systems. Consider, also, the way in which the use of tools and handicrafts occupies a prominent place in the treatment of the mentally ill, stemming from a recognition of the way in which such activities promote psychic integration and a sense of worthwhile purpose.

The significance of these considerations for the contemporary South is readily apparent. As a region which industrialized more slowly than the rest of the United States, and in which the transition from scattered farms and mill towns to megalopolis has only recently gained momentum, the South is conceivably closer to the nuances of an era dominated by tools and implements, by the paraphernalia of craftsmanship, than any other section of the country. Nowhere in America, in all probability, do craft fairs and exhibitions of traditional skills flourish more widely than they do below the Mason and Dixon Line, as the long lists of such events in *Southern Living* and other regional periodicals testify. We should cherish these activities not only for their commercial and tourist-attracting potential but also because they represent precious links with our roots in an era when people lived more harmoniously with technology than they do today.

It is because of its craft tradition that the South has been able to produce in recent years the poignant and inspiring testimonial to the homely strengths of the tool-using way of life embodied in Eliot Wigginton's best-selling series, the *Foxfire* books.⁶ The north Georgia world of Harley Carpenter, Kenny Runion, and Aunt Arie which has been explored and chronicled by Wigginton's students at the Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School may be full of suffering and drudgery, but it is also rich in basic meanings and satisfactions that have been lost to many of the alienated individuals whose daily frustrations in a variety of unfulfilling jobs are detailed in Studs Terkel's recent monumental survey, *Working*.⁷ In the future the South may succumb so completely to the lure of rapid growth and technological change as to lose contact with the ethos underlying the log houses, tub wheels, wooden implements, home remedies, and hoary superstitions that pervade the *Foxfire* series, but

not if it heeds the lesson documented so massively by Terkel's informing study: that people crave rewards from their occupations transcending the robot-like nature of many modern work experiences and the lure of the weekly paycheck, however large the monetary compensation it provides. Unfortunately, affluence and alienation all too often go hand in hand in our present highly rationalized civilization, with all of its vaunted scientific and technological expertise.

Humanity and Machines

The anomie that is so prevalent today in highly urbanized and industrialized societies has resulted in part from the triumph of a mechanistic outlook that has become dominant in the western world during the past several centuries. One need not ascribe this triumph to the workings of a crude technological determinism; there was no imperative which required us to reach the spiritual condition so aptly epitomized by the title of Siegfried Giedion's great study, *Mechanization Takes Command*.⁸ Machines are our own creations, and if we have chosen to use them as models for human behavior it is nobody's fault but our own. Similarly, there is no need to stigmatize machines as a class of technological devices, for mankind has derived many material blessings from them. But in using machines we have also tended to let machines use us, leading to much that is amiss in the world today.

Relatively simple machines were in use by the time of the Greeks and Romans, but they did not dominate the technological and cultural landscape. They began to do so for the first time in Europe during the late Middle Ages. In their valuable books on the development of modern technics, such writers as Lewis Mumford and Lynn White, Jr. have traced the growing fascination which Europeans began to have during that period for the precise measurement of time and space, and the increasing power-consciousness which led them to exploit the natural environment in an ever more matter-of-fact way.⁹ Translated into material forms, these cultural drives produced a parade of mechanical devices—clocks, pumps, bellows, boring mills, lathes, and so on—which ultimately transformed the lifestyle of western man. By the turn of the nineteenth century this trend had led to the Industrial Revolution, with its vast array of blast furnaces, rolling mills, spinning jennies, water frames, power looms, and steam engines. Within a few generations the home workshop yielded to the factory and the planet was girdled with railroad lines and steamship routes. What remained of the craft tradition by the beginning of the twentieth century was all but wiped out with the arrival of mass production, symbolized in the United States by the accomplishments of Henry Ford.¹⁰

Unfortunately, the "March of the Iron Men," as writer Roger Burlingame called it in a book bearing that title,¹¹ was accompanied by the spread of mental attitudes which permitted nearly every aspect of human existence to be regulated by the demands of machine production. As Lewis Mumford has pointed out in his recent volume *The Pentagon of Power*, the intellectual foundations of this surrender were established by the acceptance of mechanistic philosophies which ultimately abolished the very concept of the human soul and viewed the universe itself as nothing more than a vast machine whose creator, if indeed He existed at all, looked upon its workings with cosmic indifference.¹²

By contrasting the eighteenth century workshops depicted in Diderot's *Encyclopedie*, which were still within the tool-using craft tradition, with scenes of nineteenth century factory interiors, we can see clearly the way in which machines, shafts, and belt drives eventually overshadowed the workers who tended them. The mass production of sewing machines, typewriters, firearms, bicycles, automobiles, refrigerators, and other commodities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries yielded a veritable cornucopia of consumer delights, but in the process many human beings became virtual prisoners of mankind's own inventions. The very essence of the revolutionary techniques introduced by Henry Ford and other captains of heavily rationalized industry was to station people along moving assembly lines where they became literally parts of the mechanism, performing endlessly repetitive tasks of the sort which Charlie Chaplin satirized so hilariously and yet so touchingly in his classic film, *Modern Times*. A key feature of the new system was Taylorism or "time and motion study," under which industrial engineers with stop watches imposed rigid routines upon workers who became living robots in the interest of maximized efficiency.¹³

Despite the undoubted benefits of machine technology, therefore, its underlying psychology, accepted without hesitation by managers and social commentators, ran counter to the human need for a healthy sense of individuality and self-esteem. The uniformity and interchangeability of parts that was so necessary to the proper functioning of the assembly line led, when applied to human relations, to regimentation, while the worship of rationality and linear sequence in the productive process promoted the vogue of impersonal objectivity in affairs of life generally. Another characteristic of machines is that insofar as possible they operate automatically, so that all one does to operate them is to push a button or plug them in. As Erich Fromm has pointed out, this encouraged the acceptance of passive models of human behavior. It is not

by accident that the rise of a mechanistic outlook coincided with the spread of determinism, behaviorism, and other philosophies denying the freedom of human will. The outpouring of machine-made goods and the directly related rise of the advertising industry also promoted the growth of the "consumer mentality," which thinks more in terms of *having* than of *being*. A further obvious fact about machines is that, while they can simulate various types of human behavior, they are incapable of feeling. To the degree that they become models to imitate instead of mere devices to be used, we are led to suppress the emotional side of our nature.¹⁴

Perhaps the most insidious tendency of a mass production economy dominated by machines is to emphasize quantity at the expense of quality. Yet, as Robert M. Pirsig has argued in his recent book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, it is quality which alone gives meaning to life and makes material achievement humanly satisfying. When this intangible yet critical element is missing, not only does society suffer profound spiritual damage but the state of the technological arts ultimately declines also. In recounting his journey by motorcycle from the Middle West to the Pacific Coast, Pirsig argues convincingly that, when a sense of meaning is present one can pour himself just as creatively and self-fulfillingly into the use and upkeep of mechanical devices as into any traditional handicraft. But, as he also points out, the alienation characteristic of an advanced industrial society can produce mechanics whose slap-dash efforts, motivated solely by the desire for monetary rewards and devoid of any sense of spiritual identification with the work they are performing, ruin any piece of apparatus entrusted to their care.¹⁵

All too often, therefore, the underlying ethos of a highly mechanized industrial culture is inimical to a healthy sense of individuality or community. It de-emphasizes the rich diversity of human traits and feelings in favor of impersonal, and hence superficial, relationships. It promotes efficiency at the expense of meaning and seeks order at the cost of sacrificing the human capacity to love, to confer emotional support, and ultimately even to care. It reduces the dense and tangled structure of organic reality to a deceptively simple arrangement of atomistic components lacking the basic ingredient required for a sense of worthwhile purpose: the all-important conviction that the game merits the candle.

The failure of the South to industrialize and urbanize as rapidly as the rest of the United States, with all of the temporary disadvantages which this entailed, may yet turn out to have been a blessing in disguise if the region does not wantonly throw away the characteristics which still make it unique in its understandable haste to shed the burden of poverty and

economic second-class citizenship which it has borne for so long. Furthermore, many of the best aspects of the Southern heritage are no longer incompatible with economic and technological growth, provided it is growth of the right sort, intelligently conceived and prudently pursued. This is so because the machine age is over. Instead, we are now living in something quite different: an era of cybernetic systems. It is important for Southerners to recognize what this implies.

Humanity and Cybernetic Systems

At first glance, the crucial differences between the age of machines and the dawning era of cybernetic systems may not appear obvious. After all, machines are still very much with us and seem at times to dominate the technological landscape as much as they ever did. Because of inevitable cultural lag in a period of transition, the psychology of the machine still dominates the thinking of many influential people. We are still deeply conditioned by the social, economic, technological, and philosophical heritage of the past several hundred years, and when authentic prophets of the new era speak to us—such as Marshall McLuhan or Buckminster Fuller—we comprehend them only dimly, if at all.

Surely, too, we realize that cybernetic systems can enslave us just as effectively as machines ever did—indeed, possibly to an even greater extent. After all, are not the words “do not bend, fold, spindle, or otherwise mutilate” a sardonic joke among those who believe, quite justifiably, that the arrival of computers has opened up vistas of regimentation that might well make a political dictator of the past fairly drool with envy? Are there not many reasons for thinking that the technological changes of the past twenty-five years are moving us even closer to the type of society envisioned in George Orwell’s *1984* or Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*?

Perhaps this is true. But then again, perhaps not. Our immediate forebears did not have to adopt a mechanistic philosophy along with the machine; once again, it is up to us to choose. As Marshall McLuhan has contended, the underlying rationale of a cybernetic technology is actually consistent with an outlook on life that is far different from the mechanistic viewpoint which has led to so much of the alienation present in modern society. In his view, the subtle influence of electronic systems is already having a profound effect upon contemporary thinking, leading us back toward a sense of community and organic wholeness which was seriously eroded during the era of mechanical technology. We can, if we will, enjoy a future in which technology and the human spirit will blend

more harmoniously than they have done in the era from which we are now escaping.¹⁸

Cybernetic technology is rooted in the discovery and utilization of electricity that began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It is significant that most of the initial dramatic breakthroughs associated with electricity, such as the telegraph and the transoceanic cable, involved the instantaneous transmission of information over great distances. The essence of electrical technology is organic and integrative, as McLuhan emphasizes by observing that the human nervous system is the closest analogue of the social environment created by the spread of communication networks carrying electrical impulses at the speed of light. The instantaneousness of this process is highly important, because it blurs cause and effect and blends what the mechanistic mentality would see as a sequence of interconnected but nevertheless separate events into an all-encompassing *now*.

Furthermore, as indicated by developments ranging from Edison's nineteenth century systems of multiplex telegraphy to the coaxial cables of today, electrical technology permits vast quantities of information to be transmitted simultaneously. As McLuhan points out, television provides a good example, for any moment of it yields more data than can be recorded in many pages of print, a medium characterized by linear sequences of interconnected but nonetheless separate characters. We can view the consequences of this development negatively by deploring "information overload" and bemoaning the undeniably poor quality of much that we see on the television screen, but the essential point is that the process enables us to receive information not in fragmented bits and pieces but as a continuous pattern of images and relationships which must be grasped all at once. This is a more natural way of perceiving things than the linear mode ushered in several centuries ago by the mechanical technology of print, and represents a partial return to the organic awareness of primitive societies.

The integrative nature of electrical technology can also be observed in the operations of computers, which have their closest counterpart in the human brain and perform calculations of the utmost complexity in fractions of a second. From a cultural point of view, the important feature of computers is not the way in which they endlessly manipulate bits of data in accordance with a binary scheme of mathematics, but the manner in which they require us to think in terms of systems and interrelationships. As McLuhan has accurately observed, the essence of computers is circuitry, which is the antithesis of fragmentation. In order to perform a given operation, they must be programmed, which is another way of

saying that somebody must have seen a problem as a whole before a computer can handle it. It is a truism that the best programmer is the type of person who can instinctively spot even the tiniest discrepancy in the instructions which are fed into a computer, which with remorseless logic will otherwise reduce the most elaborately prepared assemblage of data into a shambles of errors within a matter of nano-seconds: "garbage in, garbage out."

When the Harvard mathematician Norbert Wiener coined the word "cybernetics" to denote the science of computers, he clearly indicated that the key concept involved is *purpose*, for the term is taken from a Greek word meaning "to steer." Proficiency in this science requires that a person have a sense of where he is going. The steps by means of which the goal is approached are checked through a process known as "feedback." This is highly significant culturally, for the tendency is to encourage generalization (seeing a problem as a whole) rather than specialization (seeing only the particular facts involved) and to highlight the importance of underlying values as opposed to aimlessness. Equally significant is the fact that the feedback process is inherently participatory: in devising the basic plan of operations to be carried out by the computer, the programmer is involved intimately in the entire scheme. In McLuhan's words,

... During the many centuries of specialist technology, man cultivated habits of detachment and indifference to the social consequences of his new specialist technologies. In the age of circuitry the consequences of any action occur at the same time as the action. Thus we now experience a growing need to build the very consequences of our programs into the original design. . . . By awakening to the significance of electronic feedback we have become intensely aware of the meaning and effects of our actions after centuries of comparative heedlessness and noninvolvement.¹⁷

Feedback is also a key feature of automation, which superficially resembles mass production but is actually quite different in its underlying tendency, as sociologist Robert Blauner and British industrialist Sir Leon Bagrit, among many others, have pointed out. In his seminal work, *Alienation and Freedom*, Blauner notes that we have been misled by the common error of identifying automation with the automobile industry, which practices true cybernation only in an incomplete form. Much more typical of automation in its correct sense are industries which handle fluid or semi-fluid raw materials such as chemicals or petroleum. In these industries only a relatively few workers are required to staff enormous facilities, and they are chiefly engaged in overseeing and coordinating a complex series of interrelated processes. What is demanded here is the exercise of responsibility and judgment, not the monotonous repetition of the same undeviating function that characterizes the assem-

bly line. Here again the purposeful, integrative tendency of cybernetic technology is evident. The promise of automation, as Blauner and Bagrit emphasize, is that ultimately human beings will be free from the need to engage in sub-human (because boring and unfulfilling) work, and will occupy only positions in which qualities of mind and spirit come into play.¹⁸

It is not by coincidence that the age of cybernetics has spawned the burgeoning field of activity known as "systems thinking," which represents a particularly hopeful phenomenon of our time. As its name implies, this involves looking at things with constant attention to interrelationships which transform static parts into dynamic wholes. Of key importance to systems thinking is its emphasis upon the concept of *synergy*, which refers to the way in which a process of interaction can unleash potentials that are unpredictable when one is merely looking at separate components. Seen in proper perspective, the development of synergistics represents an intellectual revolution comparable in importance to the discovery in the nineteenth century of the laws of thermodynamics. There is, however, one crucial and highly characteristic difference. The essence of thermodynamics, a typical product of the machine age, is the negative concept of entropy, postulating the ultimate dissipation of energy. The essence of synergy, by way of contrast, is its emphasis on the possibility of regeneration and self-transformation. It is a philosophy of holism and transcendency.¹⁹

The traditional Southern ethos, radically incongruent with the mechanist outlook, is much more compatible with the organic, holistic tendencies of cybernetic technology. The less attractive aspects of the Southern heritage have been held up to criticism and scorn too frequently to require repetition here, but the region at its best has preserved habits of mind which are desperately needed in an age which is increasingly aware of the ecological realities underlying the biosystem and the spiritual limitations inherent in a frankly materialist view of the universe. A society in search of fulfillment rather than mere quantitative achievement can find much to admire in such deep-seated Southern traits as personalism, sense of place, commitment to the land, respect for the rhythms of nature, persistence of religious awe, and lingering closeness to the affective side of human consciousness.

When Southerners talk glibly, as they are wont to do, about the way in which their region is "entering the mainstream," they may not recognize how profoundly true this is. But if they make the mistake of defining the word "mainstream" in outmoded ways, they may find that their

historical moment has passed them by. It would be a tragedy not only for the South, but for the United States as a whole, should this occur.

Part of the "good news" of our time is that growth is not necessarily antithetical to progress, as some well-meaning but essentially backward-looking critics contend. On the contrary, selective growth that is congruent with the basic tendencies of cybernetic technology is to be sought rather than avoided. The real danger confronting the South today is that in jettisoning the coarse and confining provincialism of the Red-neck it may embrace the slick and shallow boosterism of the latter-day Babbitt whose impulses are still rooted in the mechanistic age now past. As they survey the prospects and perils of the present situation, the citizens of an unusually Bible-conscious region would do well to ponder a familiar passage in the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

FOOTNOTES

1. John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (New York: Harper's Magazine Press, 1974), xx.
2. See particularly Kenneth E. Boulding, *The Meaning of the Twentieth Century: The Great Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968); and R. Buckminster Fuller, *Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969).
3. Sherwood F. Washburn, "Evolution and the Origins of Culture," in Creighton Gabel, ed., *Man Before History* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), 13.
4. For an evocative treatment of this general theme see David Macaulay, *Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973).
5. Eric Sloane, *A Museum of Early American Tools* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973) and Jared van Wagenen, Jr., *The Golden Age of Homespun* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), 269-270 and *passim*.
6. Eliot Wigginton, ed., *The Foxfire Book; Foxfire 2; Foxfire 3* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1972, 1973, 1975).
7. Studs Terkel, *Working* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
8. Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948).
9. Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1934); *The Myth of the Machine* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967); *The Pentagon of Power* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1970) and Lynn White, Jr., *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966).
10. For useful surveys of these developments, see Melvin Kranzberg and Carroll W. Pursell, eds., *Technology in Western Civilization*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
11. Roger Burlingame, *March of the Iron Men* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1938).
12. Mumford, *The Pentagon of Power*, *passim*.

13. On Taylorism see particularly Samuel Haber, *Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).
 14. Fromm, *Revolution of Hope*, 26-57, 97-146 and *passim*.
 15. Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values* (New York: Bantam Books, 1974).
 16. The discussion that follows is based principally upon Marshall McLuhan, "Cybernation and Culture," in Charles R. Dechert, ed., *The Social Impact of Cybernetics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 95-108.
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